

# *Masters of* AMERICAN LITERATURE

VOLUME ONE

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## PREFACE

*Masters of American Literature* has grown out of the increasing conviction of the editors over a period of years that the most effective way to teach American literature to undergraduates is to concentrate on the authors and works of greatest significance. After teaching the usual "shot-gun" course, with a scattering of the ammunition in all directions, they have observed the quickening of interest in their classes when their students read and discussed a single author until they had gained more than a superficial acquaintance with his life, his personality, his thought, and the quality of his literary productions.

One of the better conventional texts in the field has no less than eighty-two authors in one volume, and nearly as many in the second volume. Miscellanies of this type with a sampling of twice as many authors are not rare. The editors believe that a course in American literature should teach more than a list of names and titles. Accordingly, they have limited these volumes to a few authors of major importance. Moreover, they have endeavored to represent a wide range of an author's works, and to print "wholes" rather than "snippets." Occasionally deletions have had to be made, but usually in such cases bracketed notations provide a synopsis of the omitted portions of the text, thus maintaining the continuity.

This anthology is devoted to "masters," but not exclusively to "masterpieces." By a "master" is meant an author not only expert in his craftsmanship but also one who has made a significant contribution to the cultural and literary history of his period. Cotton Mather and Jonathan Edwards have been included, for example, not merely because of their powers of expression but also because of their intellectual pre-eminence in their day. A number of other non-

professional writers, like Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, and Woodrow Wilson would have been included if space had permitted.

The editors have attempted to provide adequate factual and critical introductions. Perhaps not all teachers and critics will agree with some of their interpretations, but they have guarded as best they could against eccentricity and minority opinions, meanwhile following, so far as possible, the leading authorities in the field. The introductory essays are intended to provide essential background information for the student, and to free class time for fruitful examination of primary texts and still leave room for the instructor to supplement these essays with his own lectures. The editors have tried to avoid over-annotation, while giving sufficient information in the footnotes to save the student the time and annoyance of constantly leafing through dictionaries of allusion, biography, mythology, quotation, etc. The bibliographies have been selected with great care, and are up-to-date. At the end of each selection, the date of composition (if known) is printed on the left; the date of publication on the right. Unless indicated otherwise, the text is always that of the accepted or last edition receiving the author's final revision or authorization.

This anthology represents the joint labor and judgment of the two editors; but Mr. Pochmann has assumed the main responsibility for the first volume, and Mr. Allen for the second. Both editors have been constantly assisted by the College Department of The Macmillan Company. Professor Oscar Cargill has given valuable criticism of the manuscript. Mr. Arthur Zeiger has generously assisted Mr. Allen in proofreading and verifying bibliographical details.

H.A.P. and G.W.A.



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*Masters of* AMERICAN LITERATURE



## INTRODUCTION

### POINTS OF VIEW

The study of American letters as a mere adjunct of British literature and the view of American culture as of an exclusively Anglo-American tradition, closely identified with the literary climate of New England, are falling before a wider and larger concept of the literature of the United States as the product of many racial and cultural strains. For upwards of two centuries Boston and Cambridge held a position of primacy, and the conventional history treated American literature as the peculiar province of New England, with the result that these earlier studies read strikingly like histories of Harvard College, together with biographical and critical sketches of some eminent literary persons educated therein. Scant attention was given to the cavalier tradition of the South as exemplified by the Carters, Lees, and Byrds of Virginia during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, to the literary coteries in Baltimore, Richmond, and Charleston during the nineteenth, or, for that matter, to the dissenting groups in Puritan New England herself; while the evaluation of so-called "foreign" (that is to say, non-English) strains or influences in American literary culture was entirely neglected until recently. Today it is well enough understood that the American melting pot was only partially effective, that immigrants were not immediately transformed by the processes of transplantation into a uniformly "American" product, but that large groups of them in widely scattered areas, after being subjected to American acculturation for generations, still maintain important elements of cultural unity and racial, if not national, solidarity.

The influences from abroad—ethnic as well as cultural—are numerous and various; they are both ancient and modern, including the classical tradition of Athens and Rome as well as the social philosophy of modern Russia; nor are they exclusively European in origin, for Americans have derived influential cultural accessions also from Asia and from Africa, from Canada, and from the Latin-American countries.

The barest beginnings have been made by way of

analyzing and evaluating these so-called "foreign" elements in the total literary productivity of the United States, but we are beginning to take cognizance of the influences which French-American and German-American elements exerted during the nineteenth century on the reading and writing habits and on the general literary climate of the nation; while the cultural cohesiveness and literary articulation among groups like the Dutch in Pennsylvania, the Yiddish in New York City, and the Scandinavian groups in the Midwest are such as to make untenable the idea that American literature is solely English in origin. Perhaps nowhere in America today are there so many so-called average citizens trying to express themselves in verse, story, or play—in book, magazine, newspaper column, or radio program—as there are among the Germans of Pennsylvania, who have developed in recent years a collective point of view that bespeaks a unified culture. It is no mere accident that twice within the past decade Pennsylvania-Dutch plays have crashed Broadway. Similarly, the achievements of the Yiddish Art Theatre of New York are not the result of any sporadic or artificial stimulation, but rather an expression of the folk consciousness and cultural aspirations of some two million Jews of that locality. Finally, we may consider as symptomatic of emigrant strains in the Midwest the works of Ole Rolvaag, whose novels preach the doctrine that emigrants from Europe "must not come empty-handed to the banquet, nor must they vanish without trace into the maelstrom" of that tremendous folk movement which Parrington called the "Great Adventure in American Civilization." No other American book presents as good a picture as does *Giants in the Earth* of the interplay of European tradition and American environment, by way of suggesting the wealth of human potentialities brought to America by the immigrants who passed annually through Ellis Island to scatter throughout the length and breadth of the land, bequeathing a rich human legacy to the wealth of American resources with which the land is naturally blessed.

Among the numerous problems that confront the student of American literature, one of the most in-

sistent is the question of what makes American literature American. By what factors or stages did it become so? It will become apparent to the student before he proceeds very far that American writings began very early to develop certain uniquely American characteristics. Somewhere, somehow, between the seventeenth-century historians and theologians and the twentieth-century poets and novelists, there was created a distinctively American literature—still possessed of some foreign ingredients but nevertheless distinctively American.

Each student will want to make his own analysis and evaluation, in the process of which he will adopt one or a combination of several points of view. He may, after the example of Vernon Louis Parrington, who viewed American literature as an essentially native phenomenon in which the forces of liberalism oppose those of conservatism, relate all that he reads to this clash of opposing forces. Second, he may find his frame of reference in what Howard Mumford Jones calls the three fundamental impulses that animate American culture: (1) the cosmopolitan spirit, (2) the spirit of the frontier, and (3) the bourgeois or middle-class spirit. Third, he may regard his problem as one that Oscar Cargill has called Ideodynamic, in which Ideas are viewed as "on the March" and "in Conflict." Or he may, following the pattern of Norman Foerster, find in the aforementioned interplay of foreign importations and native conditioning four broad factors: (1) Puritanism, (2) romanticism, (3) realism, and (4) the frontier spirit. But whatever approach he adopts, he will inevitably come back to the basic fact that American literature is the product of the interplay of two basic forces—a foreign tradition and a native environment. It may well be that the beginning student will find the four-fold plan of Professor Foerster most readily adaptable to his immediate purpose. As he proceeds in his study, he will find that no plan yet proposed is entirely adequate for the explanation of a literary culture as complex as ours. Meanwhile the four factors—the Puritan tradition, the romantic revolt, the realistic impulse, and the frontier spirit—will be sufficiently comprehensive to serve many useful purposes.

The first of these four—the Puritan tradition—was transplanted bodily. Early Puritanism, whether we think of it as a theological doctrine or as a general attitude toward life, was, and remained for a long time, basically European; but in submitting to American conditioning, it became increasingly less puritanic as it felt, with ever-increasing insistency, the effects of the romantic, the realistic, and the frontier impulses. The romantic spirit was partially of foreign,

partially of native, origin. We admit as much when we speak of Bryant as the American Wordsworth, of Cooper as the American Scott, of Longfellow as the American Tennyson, and so forth for most of the major nineteenth-century exponents of romanticism. These identifications, however superficial, are nonetheless indicative of the debt which Irving owed to Addison, Poe to Coleridge, or of the kinship we discover between the wit of Holmes and that of the Queen Anne writers. When, after the Civil War, the romantic spirit fell before the onslaughts of the disciples of realism, the latter still drew a large measure of inspiration from European sources. One recalls that both Henry James and William Dean Howells freely acknowledged their debts to European realists, and that contemporary naturalists have done no less.

While Puritanism, romanticism, and realism were motivated in varying degrees by European traditions, a more distinctively native impulse, called (for want of a better term) the frontier spirit, was exerting an influence of ever-increasing force upon the American literary consciousness. In so far as this impulse expressed itself in terms of the physical and natural, it began to work upon the earliest immigrants, and the Pilgrim fathers no less than Captain John Smith felt it on stepping ashore. The new land and its products, the forests and rivers and mountains, the wild animals and the Indians exerted molding influences upon the social, economic, and cultural life of the colonists in very real ways. This first phase of the frontier influence upon the European immigrant in America is discernible as much in John Smith's observations as a traveler and explorer of the Atlantic coastal region as in his account of the Pocahontas-Powhatan affair. Similarly, historians like Bradford, Winthrop, and Cotton Mather were acutely conscious of their conditioning by life in a new land, and diarists like Colonel William Byrd and Sarah Kemble Knight left interesting written accounts of frontier society. Crèvecoeur specifically had in mind these effects when, in answer to the question, "What is an American?" he wrote:

He is either an European, or the descendant of an European, hence that strange mixture of blood, which you will find in no other country. I could point out to you a family whose grandfather was an Englishman, whose wife was Dutch, whose son married a French woman, and whose present four sons have now four wives of different nations. He is an American, who, leaving behind him all his ancient prejudices and manners, receives new ones from the new mode of life he has embraced, the new government he obeys, and the new rank he holds. He becomes

an American by being received in the broad lap of our great *Alma Mater*. Here individuals of all nations are melted into a new race of men, whose labours and posterity will one day cause great changes in the world. . . . The American is a new man, who acts upon new principles; he must therefore entertain new ideas, and form new opinions. . . . This is an American.

Crèvecoeur wrote of a new man who had come into being during the years that led to the Revolution of 1776. This American had become self-reliant, individualistic, independent, and self-assertive. He began by questioning authority alike of church and state; and gradually absolutism, whether theocratic or purely political, fell before the critical rationalism, on the grounds of which this new man based his attack. Deistic rationalism, as an assertion of the right and ability of the individual to deal directly with his God on his own terms, without intervention of church or state, broke the power of the Puritan theocracy. And by 1776, the same spirit of individualism, adapted to the demands of democratic republicanism, declared political dependence upon England at an end. By this time the spirit bred of the frontier had joined hands with romantic ideas derived from Isaac Newton, John Locke, and Jean Jacques Rousseau, and the rise of Unitarian principles in religion and of independent republicanism in politics went forward jointly under the auspices of ideas engendered by the American frontier and others derived from European liberal thought.

During the nineteenth century a form of literary romanticism, as exemplified by the major writers from Irving to Whitman, enjoyed a remarkable efflorescence. At once in revolt against the stern moralism of the Puritanic dispensation and prophetic of the realism of the future, the spirit of the American frontier supplied the chief motivation by which the nationalization of American letters progressed. Thus Emerson, while still powerfully moved in his moral idealism by his Puritan heritage, espoused (in *Nature*, *The American Scholar*, *Self-Reliance*, and others of his works) a doctrine of humanistic self-reliance in conjunction with a distinctively American literary nationalism, and warned his contemporaries that no amount of Shakespearizing would produce another Shakespeare. In his essay on "The Poet," he argued that even Milton and Homer were inadequate as models—that "Milton is too literary and Homer too literal and historical." The American poet, he went on to say, must express the American ideal, in terms of what is immediate and indigenous, while sloughing off the distant and the exotic.

Our logrolling, our stumps and their politics, our fisheries, our negroes, and Indians, our boats and our repudiations, the wrath of rogues and the pusillanimity of honest men, the northern trade, the southern planting, the western clearing, Oregon and Texas, are yet unsung.

"America," he concluded, "is a poem," and by way of prophecy he added, "It will not wait long for metres."

Thus wrote Emerson in 1844. In 1855, Whitman printed the first edition of *Leaves of Grass* as if in answer to the call put forth eleven years earlier by Emerson, who hailed the book as signaling "the beginning of a great career" and the institution of a new and more hopeful era in American literary culture.

Since Whitman's day much has happened to give the methods of the scientist and the findings of the realist a compelling urgency. As the known universe submitted to the processes of the laboratory and observatory, science failed to confirm the faith of the romanticists that nature is vitally concerned with man and his values, and that man is the crowning work of creation. The industrialization and urbanization of a later day and the attendant complexities of life gave rise to a clash of classes and interests, of social stresses and economic strains, that turned a later generation of realists to doubt the large Whitmanesque faith in the future of America. The reservoir of the frontier that had seemed inexhaustible in Whitman's day seemed to them to have run dry; and science, instead of fulfilling its proper purposes of aiding man in his aspirations, seemed to them leagued with the forces of economic determinism to grind him underfoot. Thence arose the strident forms of social criticism manifest in so much of modern realistic and naturalistic writing. The machine age with its manifold social implications, the advance of technology with its indifference to purely human considerations, the rise of Freudian and behaviorist psychologies with their emphasis upon "libidos" and "automatisms," the artificially manipulated financial booms and succeeding economic depressions, the interposition of world-shaking wars with their attendant wholesale dislocations—all conspired to cast doubt upon the humanitarian assumptions and idealistic aspirations of the romantic age. For many, man came to be merely the by-product of vast natural processes—a helpless automaton, controlled by cosmic forces either indifferent or hostile to human hopes and desires. The scientist's telescope, searching Heaven, found nothing but Matter, subject to the same laws that govern matter here on the earth. The realist, concerning himself with material things

—with things as they are—and adopting the painstaking methods of the scientist in drawing his “cross-sections of life”—his pictures of “reality” or “actuality”—found himself becoming (consciously or unconsciously) receptive to the philosophy of scientific determinism, or naturalism. Hence mechanistic materialism came, in writers like Frank Norris or Theodore Dreiser, to be a force vitally affecting their entire outlook on life. But, however responsive writers like Dreiser and Steinbeck have been to these deterministic philosophies, they are often also equally alive to the purely human demands in a contemporary and complex world. It is by no means unusual, therefore, to find underneath this overlay of scientific determinism a fierce spirit of human protest against this bleakly determined universe and a castigation of an order that produces maladjustments leading only to frustration, despair, and tragedy. But whatever the philosophic assumptions or the premeditated techniques of the contemporary writer, he is motivated very largely by the immediacy of the issues in a manner to make many modern books signally alive, compelling, and American. The exotic, the feudalistic, the “unrealistic” or dreamily romantic have been banished.

In the threefold progression of American literature from Puritanism through romanticism to realism, the frontier spirit has exerted an influence of steadily growing vitality and force. For the earliest generations of immigrants to America, bringing a full-blown literary tradition to a new land, the frontier served as little more than a background or backdrop for their writings. This “scenic” concept of America, in terms of the physical and natural features of the land, still chiefly motivated Cooper’s *Leatherstocking* tales; it partially inspired Irving’s *Knickerbocker* stories, Parkman’s histories, and Mark Twain’s stories of boy life in Missouri or of the scenes sketched in *Roughing It*; it continues vital in our folk literature, in local-color fiction, and in what passes currently for the literature of regionalism.

But as early as the mid-eighteenth century, the frontier spirit began to express itself forcibly in terms of the ideas which a frontier society developed; and these ideas are reflected no less in the religious and political revolutions of the eighteenth century than in the vibrant spirit of literary nationalism that animated American writers from Freneau to Whitman.

Early in the nineteenth century the frontier began a rapid movement westward, and there followed a succession of frontiers, geographical and ideological. As successive waves of scouts, pioneers, and settlers pushed from the Atlantic to the Pacific, mountain

ranges, valleys, and deserts alike were crossed and conquered. The spirit of *Leatherstocking* was transmuted into that of Andrew Jackson; the Daniel Boone of one generation became the pioneer of the next who went “a-westering” in a prairie schooner; and so successions of frontiersmen, including adventurers, traders, trappers, hunters, ranchers, farmers, lumbermen, prospectors, and miners followed until, by the end of the century, the frontier was gone. But its influence lived on. The rugged individualism, independence, self-assertiveness, expansive optimism, vibrant energy, confident resourcefulness, boundless vitality, and what passes among Europeans as “American brawn, brag, and ‘know-how’”—all of them traits of frontier character—still operate. The tall tale of the West that infuses so much of American humor is no less a part of it than the demand for bigger and faster automobiles and more of them. The stories of Bret Harte and of Hamlin Garland, the novels of Willa Cather and of Ole Rolvaag, the poetry of Joaquin Miller and of Robinson Jeffers alike are imbued with it. Realism especially has found the West congenial. Long before the physical frontier vanished, the spirit it had fostered reversed its direction and headed eastward, producing what Vernon Louis Parrington called the “Backwash of the Frontier,” until New York and even Boston and Hartford felt its impact. And today, a half-century after the “passing of the frontier,” we hear more and more about new frontiers—economic, social, scientific, educational, and, most recently, international. This American spirit has become an effervescence in the blood that is loath to admit a possible future when there shall be no new frontiers to conquer.

In short, American culture is not exclusively one thing or another, but an amalgamation of many ingredients that must be viewed in relation to each other. Aside from the accident by which the language of the Pilgrim fathers became the dominant (though by no means exclusive) language of Americans, their chief claim to primacy in America is owing to the fact that they came to these shores relatively earlier than did the Germans, the Norwegians, the Italians, or the Poles. American literary culture is like a large tapestry woven of many threads, exhibiting an intricate pattern of variegated colors; and the critical student who is ambitious to approach the study of it from anything more than a parochial point of view must disabuse his mind of the idea that American literature is an exclusively Anglo-American phenomenon, the product of a peculiarly English tradition that does not in fact exist.

## THE PURITAN BACKGROUND

As a matter of fact, even during the seventeenth century, while the Puritans were establishing themselves and their institutions and laying the groundwork for what was to become the basically English tradition of letters in America, they found themselves in contact and sometimes in conflict with the French to the north and west of them, with the Spaniards to the south and southwest, and with the Dutch and Swedes almost in their midst. How they overcame these rival nationalities is a long and involved story that belongs properly to history. Their success was owing in large measure to the permanence of their colonial establishments, aided markedly by the stability of their linguistic and literary traditions. For it is a noteworthy fact that the early Puritans came to stay, and to that end either brought with them a full complement of cultural and institutional heritages or set promptly to work establishing them. For example, lacking an institution for the training of their clergy and for the preservation of the humanistic tradition of education and learning to which they had become accustomed in the old country, the Massachusetts Bay colonists, six years after their arrival, established Harvard College for "the advancement and education of youth in all manner of good literature, Artes, and Sciences." It may be observed, in passing, that the proportion of university-trained men in America has never been higher than it was among the first generation of Puritans. A printing press came next, and in 1640 there was issued by the newly established press in Cambridge the first book published in what is today the United States—*The Bay Psalm Book*. Seven years later they passed the Act of 1647 requiring every town of one hundred families or more to provide free common and grammar school instruction, and Connecticut instituted a similar law in 1650. These are but a few of the countless expedients adopted by the early Puritans in their desire to build in the new world another England that should be, except for such modifications as their religion prescribed, as much like the Renaissance England they had left as they could make it.

Indeed, the uniqueness and singularity of the American Puritan have been overstressed. He was not the gaunt, black-clothed, steeple-crowned kill-joy bent on proscribing all the pleasures of life that he is represented to be in the cartoons; he led no crusade against alcoholic beverages; and he was not oblivious to art, beauty, and the satisfactions of gracious living. The architecture of Puritan buildings, the superb

lines of their household furniture, and the simple beauty of their pewter and silverware betoken a lively though not ornate or florid aesthetic sense. To be sure, the Puritan preachers fulminated against drunkenness, but they poured no confiscated liquor into the gutters. It was not the drink itself but the abuse of it that Increase Mather warned against in his sermon, *Wo to Drunkards* (1673):

Drink is in its self a good creature of God, and to be received with thankfulness, but the abuse of drink is from Satan; the wine is from God, but the Drunkard is from the Devil.

Actually, wine flowed freely even at such pious ceremonies as the ordination of ministers; nor were other forms of merry-making banned. For example, at the ordination of Jonathan Edwards his father caused a dance to be held in honor of the occasion; while Cotton Mather recommended musical training, especially choral singing, at the same time that he held dancing schools to be a necessary part of a full-bodied system of education. The Puritans' concern, like that of other religious folk, was lest music, dancing, and riotous merriment interfere with Christian observances and duties or lead to licentiousness.

Similarly, the conventional view of the Puritans as harsh, self-centered, and unemotional, as without love for their families or their fellow men, has to be revised in the light of evidence regarding their daily lives as we find it in the letters, diaries, biographies, and histories of the period. It may be presumed that the rigorous exigencies of a frontier existence often bred a harshness not unlike that which Hamlin Garland described in delineating human relations on the great plains while the West was being won. What is more, the rigidity of the Puritan creed often dominated the softer traits of affection and compliance, substituting sometimes a desolate sanctity in the home. But oftener the tenderness of duty, the sense of subordination, the competence of training, and the repose of a clear conscience gave to the Puritan home an atmosphere of serene and equitable joy.

Nor were the Puritans devoid of the spirit of benevolence and charity. To be sure, they had little of the modern spirit of organized alms-giving or wholesale humanitarianism; yet even Cotton Mather, by whose time the originally fine fervor and spiritual idealism of seventeenth-century Puritanism had undergone a certain hardening process, professed a spirit of Christian charity and found no satisfaction so "ravishing" as "relieving the distresses of a poor miserable neighbor" or redressing "the miseries under



which mankind is generally languishing." And it is to be recalled that his *Essays To Do Good* were acknowledged by Franklin as the primary inspiration behind his own many-sided humanitarian projects. There was a society in which each man was expected to contribute his full share toward the common goal of establishing religious, political, and social security. Practical or realistic, and endeavoring to promote frugality and self-reliance, they often exercised the strength of will to withhold the "wicked dollar" that Emerson, of a more humanitarian-minded generation, often wished he could muster. Promiscuous almsgiving, they feared, would destroy personal initiative and eventually promote general indigence; but there is no evidence that worthy cases of need among the Puritans went unheeded any more than they do today.

The more we arrive at the facts, the more do we realize that the Puritans of the seventeenth century lived a fairly normal, everyday kind of life, not occupied mainly with marching to meeting, shooting unfriendly Indians by the way, or burning witches. It is a well-established fact that they burned no witches, though they hanged some. While their poor victims were therefore no less dead, the difference in method of execution is noteworthy. Moreover, it is to be remembered that many educated people the world over believed in witchcraft, and that while thirty-four were executed in New England, "half a million" suffered martyrdom in Europe. The Mathers, often singled out as chiefly responsible for the Salem witchcraft delusions, once they saw the thing getting out of control, did as much as anybody toward bringing the tragedies to an abrupt end by counseling moderation and pointing to the inadequacy of the evidence on which the accused were condemned. Professor G. L. Kittredge, after an exhaustive inquiry into the matter, concludes that there was nothing in the tenets of New Englanders by which witchcraft can be ascribed to something peculiar to the religious opinions or the theology of the Puritans.

Thus many of the peculiar and extreme notions which have become attached to Puritanism in the popular fancy fall away as the facts become known, as do also many of the so-called differences by which Puritans are sometimes distinguished from Anglicans and Protestants generally. Actually, they were about ninety per cent in agreement with contemporary Protestants on all social, intellectual, and religious questions. The remaining ten per cent, however, on which there was dispute, made all the difference to them, so much so that they chose to leave their native land for the privilege of starting anew, albeit in a

wild country, and of carrying forward their intent of purifying or perfecting the doctrine of the Church of England.

Puritanism had a long history in Europe before it migrated to America. Its origins go back to the protests of Luther and beyond to Wyclif, but more immediately to the break between the Church of England and the Pope of Rome. In seventeenth-century America, Puritanism was nothing more than an extension of the doctrine of reform—the idea that the Reformation remained incomplete, that more abuses remained to be corrected, that the movement for purification should continue until the Church of England should be restored to the "purity" of the Church as originally instituted by Christ. While the Anglicans in general remained content with what was known as the "Elizabethan Settlement" of the Church, the Puritans wanted to proceed with reforms, though there was much difference of opinion among them regarding the means to be employed or the precise ends to be sought. In the main, however, they agreed on certain cardinal points, derived from the institutional theological system of Calvin. These included (1) a supreme triune God as the absolute Creator and Determiner of all things, as infinitely supreme as man is abjectly low; (2) the Holy Scripture as the exclusive revelation of God; (3) man's fall from original righteousness through willful disobedience, hence his loss of all ability of will to do any spiritual good, hence his total depravity and the imputation of Adam's guilt to all his posterity; (4) the "high mystery" of Election and Predestination, by which, through the mediation of Christ, the mercy of God is manifest toward the elect, chosen by His Almighty power of determining them to that which is good, whence it follows that the elect can neither totally nor finally fall from grace, just as the damned cannot attain it; and (5) salvation as dependent upon an inner consciousness of being of the elect, not at all upon outward "good works," although "good works done in obedience to God's commandments are evidences of a true and lively faith."

This last doctrine, which the modern student finds especially puzzling, is explained fully by Cotton Mather in his *Magnalia Christi Americana* (1702), in which he reproduced the Puritan "Confession of Faith" drawn up in 1680. He explains that corrupt man cannot of himself initiate anything good; hence his best works merit neither pardon for his sins nor eternal life. Since through Adam's fall, every man but the elect is damned to eternal torment, it is the duty of everyone to give all diligence to make his

calling and election sure by ascertaining introspectively whether his acts are agreeable and in harmony with God's will as revealed in Scripture, for the promise of Christ and salvation by Him are revealed only in and by the word of God. But aside from this outward revelation of the Gospel, there is necessary also an inward conviction—the “effectual and irresistible work of the Holy Ghost upon the whole soul for the producing in man a spiritual life,” which may be recognized as something akin to the Quaker conscience and Inner Light. Recognizing the fact that man wages “a continual and irreconcilable war, the flesh lusting against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh,” the Puritan was impelled (1) toward individualistic introspection and diligent soul-searching and (2) toward an eager poring over the will of God as revealed in the Bible.

To the latter end, sound learning, especially linguistic scholarship, was a requisite, for it was well enough understood by the early Puritans that certain passages in the Bible seemed equivocal if taken by themselves or if unchecked against the linguistic transformations which the Bible had undergone at the hands of its numerous translators. “All things in scripture,” so they declared officially in 1680, “are not alike plain in themselves, nor alike clear to all. . . . Where there is a question about the true and full sense of any scripture (which is not manifold but one) it must be searched and known by other places that speak more clearly.” Inevitably they deferred to the best educated among them, the university-trained clergy, to resolve these questions pertaining to God's will and law; and if anything had been wanting to elevate their respect for their ministers, the resulting growth in their power and influence would have supplied it. For the early Puritans, learned and unlearned alike, came to America for the purpose of establishing there God's ideal state of society. Since they were loyal Englishmen, the English common law was for them the basis of most social and political appointments; but on points not covered by the common law, especially in matters of church government, they zealously searched God's will, *i. e.*, the Bible, for guidance. Accordingly they established a theocracy, in which the government, as the agent of the King, operated under English law, and as the agent of religion, under divine law—which necessarily meant, according to the interpretation of and under the direction of its religious leaders. These leaders proceeded with admirable strategy to charter and incorporate the several settlements under the proper terms, taking care so to restrict the suffrage by religious qualifications as not

to let the power slip from their hands into those of non-church members. To all “right-thinking” Puritans the unity of the church and state was axiomatic for the simple reason that it seemed impossible to them to separate man's spiritual from his earthly estate.

Yet from the first there were dissenting voices, not only from men like the Anglican Thomas Morton of unsavory, worldly reputation at Merry Mount, but also from individuals in their midst, and Governor Winthrop of the Massachusetts Bay Colony found it necessary to defend himself and his policies in court as early as 1645. However, it is worth observing that after securing an acquittal of the charge that he had exceeded his proper authority, he did not let the opportunity slip to inform all and sundry that he intended to enforce the unity of church and state as founded on the principles of morality according to God's word:

Concerning liberty, I observe a great mistake in the country about that. There is a twofold liberty, natural (I mean as our nature is now corrupt) and civil or federal. The first is common to man with beasts and other creatures. . . . This liberty is incompatible and inconsistent with authority, and cannot endure the least restraint of the most just authority. The exercise and maintaining this liberty makes men grow more evil, and in turn to be worse than brute beasts. . . . The other kind of liberty I call civil or federal, it may also be termed moral . . . it is the liberty to do that which is good, just, and honest.

And he went on in a manner to leave no doubt in the minds of his auditors that the determination of what is “good, just, and honest” rested with their betters, *i. e.*, the magistrates, supported and instructed by the learned ministry. Liberty thus defined supplied the foundation for the Puritan insistence upon religious conformity, for there was no doubt in their minds that theirs was the only true and pure religion, and it seemed equally clear to them that they could not willingly countenance people's mistakenly following false religions. Professor Perry Miller puts the matter in the following terms:

The government of Massachusetts, and of Connecticut as well, was a dictatorship and never pretended to be anything else; it was a dictatorship, not of a single tyrant, or of an economic class, or of a political faction, but of the holy and regenerate. Those who did not hold with the ideals entertained by the righteous, or who believed God had preached other principles, or who desired that in religious belief, morality, and ecclesiastical preferences all men should be left at liberty to do as they wished—such persons had every liberty, as Nathaniel Ward said, to stay away from New England. If they did come, they were expected to keep their opinions to themselves; if they discussed them

in public or attempted to act upon them, they were exiled; if they persisted in returning, they were cast out again; if they still came back, as did four Quakers, they were hanged on Boston Common. And from the Puritan point of view, it was good riddance.

But this doctrine early came under the attack of Roger Williams, who argued, in a series of pamphlets which he exchanged with John Cotton, for religious toleration and what this principle implied, namely, the separation of church and state. He was banished for his pains. Anne Hutchinson maintained the heretical Antinomian doctrine that she could commune directly with God, that she required no clerical intermediary; and she went on to imply that she was prepared to follow the promptings of the voice within against all the precepts of the Bible, the churches, the voice of reason, the findings of the Biblical scholars, or the combined authority of priest and magistrate in Massachusetts Bay. The magistrates and ministers were not slow to recognize in her doctrine of immediate communion a form of heresy that would quickly destroy their authority and ultimately topple the entire theocratic structure to the ground. Summarily banished, she joined Roger Williams in Rhode Island. Thomas Hooker left peaceably with the larger part of his congregation for Connecticut, where he was free to institute a government which combined church and state less strictly and enjoined religious conformity less severely than was mandatory in Massachusetts.

In 1639 Governor Winthrop admitted the fact in his *Journal* that "the people long desired a body of laws, and thought their condition very unsafe while so much power rested in the discretion of magistrates." What Winthrop did not go on to say is that his setting-up of the first board of Assistants had instituted an oligarchy, with full powers, legislative, executive, and judicial. While the freemen early won the right to elect Deputies to the General Court, they lost their fight against the assumed power of the Assistants to veto the acts of the Deputies, and the Assistants continued to hold the preponderance of political power as long as the General Court merely passed occasional acts and resolutions, leaving the Assistants (as magistrates and judges) to declare the law in all civil and criminal cases and to fix the penalty. The magistrates held (and the logic of the freemen could not gainsay it) that in a Bible Commonwealth the law was God's law as revealed in Scripture; but it became a matter of common observation that the magistrates were clever at finding in the Bible what they wished to find. By 1634 already there was a good deal of agitation among the

Deputies, as the representative body, for the adoption of a published set of laws, wherein every man might read his rights and duties, as well as the penalties for disobedience, thus substituting a government by laws for a government by men. For under the old dispensation, by which the magistrate handed down his decision by right of magisterial discretion, he was free to indulge his personal desire or whim, if he could find a Biblical text to bear him out. It seemed safer to have the laws down in black and white so that there might be no mistaking the terms. There followed a series of agitations that led to the adoption of a written code in 1641 and the Township Act of 1647. The latter is especially significant because by it the General Court gave to non-freemen who were of age, and who took an oath of fidelity to Massachusetts Bay, the right to serve on juries, to be elected selectmen of towns, and what was most important, to vote on all local matters, such as the assessment of taxes, the distribution of lands, the laying-out of highways, the ordering of schools, and the herding of cattle. This act, says Professor Samuel E. Morison, was "the entering wedge of democracy in Massachusetts; it gave manhood suffrage in the towns, and opened to non-church members the town-meeting, the most important school of self-government in New England if not in the United States." A still more liberal *Book of the General Lawes and Libertys* was adopted in 1648, and so there followed acts and concessions until toward the end of the century the power of the theocratic oligarchy was seriously damaged.

Many causes contributed to the break-up of the old order. The complexion of the colonies was changing from agrarian simplicity to commercial complexity. Worldly prosperity, founded on the fisheries, the carrying trade, and commerce in rum and slaves, distracted men's attention from religious concern and theological speculation to an ever-increasing attendance upon worldly affairs, while the new royal charter of 1691 struck the power of the clergy a crippling blow by replacing religious tests with property qualifications for suffrage. The theocrats, endeavoring vainly to bolster their position, attempted to arrest the processes of the new order by piling up laws and making new proscriptions, at the same time that they sought to suppress criticism. It fell to the lot chiefly of Increase and Cotton Mather to try to halt the processes of the changing world in New England. Though they labored indefatigably and prodigiously, their best efforts were not good enough, and Increase Mather's removal from the presidency of Harvard College in 1701 and his famous son's failure to

secure the appointment for himself signaled the fall of the theocratic state.

Harvard College had become infected with rationalism and wanted no more traffic with the Mathers or with the policy they represented. The orthodox therefore established Yale in 1701, and there, at least through the pulpit-thumping career of "pope" Dwight (terminated by his death in 1817), Calvinism sought to hold its embattled position. A few years after the overthrow of the Mather regime at Harvard, John Wise's *Vindication of the Government of New England Churches* (1717) boldly developed the idea of "the law of Nature" as "the dictates of right reason," and went on to declare that as the people "have a power, every man in his natural state, so upon a combination they can and do bequeath this power unto others, and settle it according as their united discretion shall determine," whence it follows that when the entrusted power is abused, "that power returns to the people again, as to its natural source." From this point onward it was by the most natural progression of ideas that rational principles in religion and the democratic doctrine of natural human rights instead of theocratic ideas in politics should develop. This evolution of radical thought can be traced from Wise's *Vindication*, through such treatises as John Barnard's *Throne Established by Righteousness* (1734) and Jonathan Mayhew's *Discourse Concerning Unlimited Submission* (1750), to the religious and political pronouncements of Thomas Paine and Thomas Jefferson, as incorporated in the Declaration of Independence and put into practice in the American Revolution.

No man or set of men are wholly responsible for the decline of the Puritan theocracy. To be sure, its later defenders often played into the hands of the disciples of rational theology and representative democracy by adopting short-sighted policies and foolish stratagems, or, as in the case of Jonathan Edwards' *Freedom of the Will* (1754), by hammering home their position so heavily-handedly that they defeated their own purposes. But below and behind all this hacking at authority and absolutism lay a deeper cause that would doubtless have asserted itself whatever the men or the times. The spirit of the Reformation, of which Puritanism was born, carried within itself, at least as far as the Puritan theocracy in America was concerned, the germs that were calculated to achieve its undoing. The two intellectual principles enunciated by the Reformation—"the rightful duty of free inquiry" and "the priesthood of all believers"—were always available to be turned against a theological order that threatened to curb

free inquiry or to interpose itself between man and his God. The first of these principles led to liberty; the second, to equality. Both became fecund toward the end of the seventeenth century, and during the eighteenth they became explicit in the growth of Unitarianism in theology and of democratic republicanism in politics.

However, before this twofold revolt was finally consummated, Puritanism had dominated life in New England for upwards of a century. During this time American institutions were in process of formation, and not unnaturally they took on, during this vital period of incubation, a distinctively puritanic stamp which long survived the so-called Puritan age of American civilization.

Two kinds of Puritanism are to be distinguished. One, written with the capital P, has reference to a Calvinistic theology and a theocratic polity that passed as the eighteenth century wore on. The other, written with the small p, insinuated itself into the common life of the people in innumerable, subtle ways. It remains a potent factor today—none more potent. This element of our national heritage, sometimes termed the puritan tradition, as distinguished from historical or theological Puritanism, is less easily defined than the other, partly because Puritanism itself, from which it stems, was of several kinds—seldom quite the same thing at different times or in different places. Even if it had flowed from a single, consistent source, the puritan tradition became mixed up with or influenced by others of the cultural traditions that make up American civilization, so that it is not always clear what is owing to the puritan or to some other strain. For example, we have seen the elements of sobriety, reticence, reserve, self-reliance, discipline, and moral integrity identified with the puritan heritage. Yet sobriety was also a virtue practiced by the Quakers. Self-reliance in the practical affairs of life was bred of the Puritan way of life, but it was no less a trait fostered among all kinds of people on the frontier, whether along the Atlantic seaboard during the seventeenth century, on the mountain ranges during the eighteenth, or on the great plains of the West during the nineteenth. Religious fervor, spiritual faith, and what has been called the "practical idealism" of the Puritans are sometimes designated as marks by which the puritan tradition manifests itself among Americans of later generations. But here again we could point to French Huguenots, Pennsylvania-German Quietists, and Dutch Reformed who have traditionally cultivated the same traits. Nevertheless, among all the various racial, national, or religious groups that went

into the making of America, the English Puritans were the earliest and most firmly entrenched, and their cultural influence became the most pervasive. Moreover, the special characteristics developed among groups like the Dutch Reformed, Scotch Presbyterians, or French Huguenots were usually less antipathetic than complementary to the spirit of puritanism, so that they may, for practical purposes, be considered part and parcel of the same impulse. At all events, the listing of such traits of character as moral earnestness, sobriety, reticence, reserve, self-discipline, integrity, practical idealism, godliness, and other-worldliness as we are accustomed to think of them in connection with the puritan spirit is to give them a kind of cumulative cogency that may be helpful to the student in identifying what in Bryant and Emerson or in Emily Dickinson and Robert Frost is owing to this abiding inheritance from our religious-minded forebears.

Yet care must be exercised not to take at face value some of the ready identifications commonly made today between current ideas or attitudes and the spirit of puritanism. Thus, what we know as "fundamentalism," while it may derive in part from the puritan tradition after undergoing the transmutations of time and place, shows also admixtures from other forces and impulses, and is certainly no pure derivative. The Puritans would have been entirely antipathetic to the doctrine that the literal interpretation of Scripture must be maintained in spite of and against all reason, learning, and scientific demonstration. They would not have accepted as valid the evidences of "getting religion" nor approved of the revivalist orgies as these are promoted by the camp meeting; "hitting the sawdust trail" would have seemed abominable to them. Religion with the Puritans was a very serious, complex, and highly intellectual affair, for which they trained their clergy with the same care that our age devotes to the training of its scientific specialists. Again, though they espoused doctrines of practical and Christian humanism, they would have remonstrated against all recent attempts to "humanize" religion—to smooth over hard doctrines, to find easy ways to Heaven, and to introduce sweetness and light at the expense of sound logic and hard-headed realism. Nor would they have taken kindly to such modern efforts as we have witnessed to bring Christ down to earth by making him "The First Great Humanitarian" in the Rotarian sense of the word, or invoking his endorsement of some political party or social doctrine. On the other hand, there are contemporary traits of mind and character that the Puritans would have approved: the sober spirit

which still invests a large element of the American populace, the sense of decency and sobriety among common folk, the spirit of keeping the Sabbath, the simple honesty that makes the average man's word as good as his bond, the high moral idealism of an Emerson or the renunciation of an Emily Dickinson, the deferring of immediate sensual pleasure or worldly gain for the more lasting spiritual satisfactions of duty earnestly heeded and labor honestly performed. And these traits, among others, are evidences of the continuance of the puritan tradition in American life.

#### PURITAN LITERARY THEORY

Aside from this intangible influence that is still very much alive, the Puritans left a written record that is more precise in that it leaves whoever reads himself into it definitely affected, one way or another. The Puritans wrote much, and, on the whole, well. While they had little interest in the cultivation of letters as letters, no generation since them has taken writing more seriously. They were engaged in what they considered the most momentous experiment made during the Christian era to institute God's kingdom on earth, and accordingly they felt divinely impelled to make a full record of the experiment so that men, then and later, might read and go on to do likewise, by building upon the foundations which they were busy laying. They wrote always from conviction, usually with fervor, and often with inspiration—oftener than we realize, because of the difference between their and our concepts of what constitutes inspiration.

They had their own ideas about writing, choosing a simple, direct method of expression in favor of circumlocution or flowery imagery. A Mather's conception of good literature might not coincide with our understanding of the term, but it included a knowledge of the poetry, drama, and history of the ancients and the ability to write a prose sentence that said what the author meant. While great scholars like John Cotton were tempted, as other scholars have been, to affect "florid strains" and a "pompous eloquence," Cotton Mather rated it to his grandfather's credit that he relished "the *Words of Wisdom*" above "the *Wisdom of Words*." The Puritan minister was carefully trained in rhetoric and pulpit eloquence, but the "high style" characteristic of Anglican preaching during the early seventeenth century was in disrepute among them. In 1642, for example, John Cotton disparaged "affecting carnal eloquence" in the pulpit, on the ground that "swelling words of humane wisdom make mens preaching

seeme to Christ (as it were) a blubber-lipt Ministry"; while a contemporary put it succinctly by saying, "Gods Altar needs not our pollishings" Yet they were not foolishly extreme in this matter of attending to "Conscience rather than Eloquence, fidelity rather than poetry," for as Michael Wigglesworth put it, "Eloquence gives new luster and bewty, new strength new vigour, new life unto truth . . . 'tis a fit bait to catch the will and affections"; and Jonathan Mitchell stated their position very well when he said, "Great Truths to dress in Meeter, Becomes a Preacher," adding—

No Cost too great, no Care too curious is  
To set forth Truth, and win mens Souls to bliss.

Even historians like Bradford and Winthrop sometimes sought to enliven the monotony of their historical prose accounts by breaking into verse, though it usually turned out to be verse of no very high order, by either their own or our standards.

The Puritan writer's chief concern was not with poetic flights of the imagination but with "plainnesse and perspicuity, both of matter and manner of expression," so that what he said would not "dazzle, but direct the apprehension of the meanest . . . and make a hard point easy and familiar in explication." For the very serious and very practical matter in hand, he knew very well that the cultivation of a "studied simplicity" was the proper style, and that one honest, straightforward prose tract was worth a hundred poetical effusions. For the common man distrusted fiction and symbolic figures, and wanted none of them; and the more cultivated, while freely acknowledging the poet's high calling, feared the danger that lay in the magic spell of poetry—feared that it "might tempt men away from truth to fable." Not that the Puritans did not write verse. We are only beginning to discover how much, as considerable masses of manuscripts come to light. But most of it was verse, like Michael Wigglesworth's *Day of Doom*, designed to lead men in the right way to Heaven. Whether casting their words into poetic meters or prose rhythms, the Puritan writers found the chief inspiration for their writing, as for their thinking, in the Great Book, which was the Be-all and the End-all of wisdom. Fortunately it happened that their model was one of the great masterpieces of English literature, the King James version of the Bible. They found in it not only a book of religious instruction but also a rich repository of history (sacred and secular), including colorful stories of "intrigue and adventure, primitive folklore and scandalous anecdote, proverbial wisdom, lyric poetry, and tender

romance." Quite naturally, when they wrote, their figures and illustrations were drawn from Biblical stories of the kings and prophets as often as from ancient history and classical mythology. This being so, we can understand why their style of writing should fall, consciously or unconsciously, into the Biblical cadences and rhythms that distinguish so much of their poetry and prose.

Still, compared with the full-bodied, myriad-colored richness of English Renaissance literature, Puritan writings seem didactic, bookish, narrow, and indifferent to beauty as we conceive beauty. But it is to be remembered that if their works were didactic, they were so because of the Puritans' overpowering desire to live in harmony with God's will; they were passionately in earnest about spiritual realities; and in their writings they sought, by every means known to their rhetoric, to stimulate in their readers or hearers the elementary and absorbing passion of curiosity concerning spiritual self-preservation. If they seem bookish, it is because they respected the divine truth contained in the Bible, and because they sought accurately to transmit that truth to their readers. The preface to the *Bay Psalm Book* (1640) contains an illuminating statement (well worth careful scrutiny) by the translators, Richard Mather, John Eliot, and Thomas Welde, the first two of whom were graduates of Oxford and Cambridge, respectively:

If . . . the verses are not alwayes so smooth and elegant as some may desire or expect; let them consider that God's Altar needs not our pollishings: Ex. 20. for wee have respected rather the plaine translation, then to smooth our verses with sweetnes of any paraphrase, and soe have attended Conscience rather then Elegance, fidelity rather then poetry, in translating the hebrew words into english language, and Davids poetry into english meetre . . .

Educated and cultivated men as the translators were, they did not mangle the beautiful King James version of the Psalms because they were ignorant or because they lacked good taste; they did it deliberately: to make a true translation they consciously sought to make it literal. If, in the process, they lost some or all of the beauty of the Renaissance rendition, the loss, they felt, was infinitely compensated for by the gain in truth. For the Bible represented divine truth above the need or the possibility of garnishment—truth which no mere physical or verbal beauty could enhance. The truth and beauty which the Puritan chiefly loved were the truth and beauty of holiness, the result of living in harmony with the will of God as revealed in the Bible. All other forms of beauty were inconsequential. If the Puritans were narrow, it was because their interests were vertical rather than

horizontal; they sought nothing less than moral perfection and spiritual salvation, to which ends all other means and ends were incidental. Thus their literary practice grew out of their literary theory, which, in turn, was a logical development out of their religious theory. Thus, too, their literature developed a consistency of matter and a unity of tone unequalled since in America. As long as the body of their theological theory held together, so long did their style of writing endure. So it came to pass that the Puritan conception of poetry as a means to expressing great truths in exalted moods was not superseded by the urbane appreciation of poetry as a social accomplishment until the eighteenth century was well under way.

#### COLONIAL WRITINGS

Exploration and colonization have always been conducive to the writing of description, history, chronicles, letters-home, memoirs, biography, and autobiography. John Smith had barely landed his colonists at Jamestown in Virginia, in 1607, when he set to writing his *True Relation of Such Occurrences and Accidents of Noate as Hath Hapned in Virginia since the first Planting of the Colony*, published in London the next year. There followed numerous other writings of his, most notable among which were *A Map of Virginia, the Commodities, People, Government and Religion* (1612) and his more comprehensive, autobiographical work, *The True Travels, Adventures, and Observations of Captaine John Smith* (1630). The founding of Plymouth, thirteen years after Jamestown, was equally well documented. Before landing, the colonists framed the Mayflower Compact, by which they bound themselves into "a civil body politick," the precise wording of which Governor William Bradford took care to reproduce in his *History of the Plymouth Plantation*, begun about 1630, but embracing antecedent events in the form of annals, and terminating about 1647. But long before this extensive work was begun, Bradford, Edward Winslow, and others wrote up the experiences of the colonists from November, 1620, to December, 1621, in a document signed "G. Mourt," and hence known as *Mourt's Relation*, published in London in 1622. Similarly Governor John Winthrop began at the beginning in his diary-like history of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. The first entry reads: "Easter Sunday, March 29, 1630. Riding at the Cowes, near the Isle of Wight, in the Arbella, a ship of three hundred and fifty tons," and so he proceeds to chronicle dutifully every event that

seemed worthy of record, until he reached his last entry in 1649, the year of his death.

These represent but a few specimens of a dozen or more early colonial historians, Northern and Southern. The works of Bradford and Winthrop take on a special significance not only because of their authors' prominence in colonial affairs but also because of their intrinsic merits. Bradford's history, for example, tells an unadorned story of adventure and perseverance, of tenacious idealism that triumphed over reverses and privations, in a homely, lucid style of Biblical simplicity, illustrating that artlessness of great art which comes near making it the literary classic of the American seventeenth century. Winthrop's *Journal*, dealing with the affairs of the far more powerful and numerous Massachusetts Bay settlements, reflects an author of relatively greater learning, wealth, and social standing than Bradford. A veritable compendium of information, it makes a record of official acts and of public as well as private affairs, elections and assemblies, births and deaths, wars and harvests, theological controversies and political contests, visible evidences of God's good will or wrath manifested toward men (termed "Divine Providences"), and a thousand other memorabilia or curiosa—all set down in the order of happening, with little respect for sequence or congruity. Yet so wide is the scope and so faithfully does the book portray the spirit of the times, that Noah Webster, its first editor, had some justification for calling it *The History of New England*.

Other writings there were a-plenty—sermons without number and polemical works chiefly touching theological questions, exegetical tracts, descriptions and accounts of the country, reports to the stockholders and managers of the trading company, or pamphlets designed to attract new settlers. Among the more notable controversial writings are Thomas Morton's irreverently satirical attack upon the Puritan ordering of things in his *New English Canaan* (1637) and the exchange, during the forties and early fifties, of a series of pamphlets between Roger Williams and John Cotton concerning religious conformity and theocratic polity. Nathaniel Ward's *Simple Cobbler of Aggawam* of 1647, a notable protest against the doctrine of religious toleration, belongs to the same general category of theological writings, as do most of the titles issuing from the studies of John Cotton (1584-1652), Thomas Hooker (1586-1647), and Thomas Shepard (1605-1652), the three "complete preachers" of the day.

Meanwhile poetry was not neglected altogether—



epigrams, simple ditties, popular saws, broadsides, and occasional verses of many kinds, including commemorative poems and epitaphs, being especially popular. The deaths of notable persons were special occasions tempting the colonial poetasters to essay new heights of rhetorical splendor and untried figurativeness. Some of the metaphysical similes and metaphors in this type of verse are unmatched for being far-fetched and atrocious; not a few show real ingenuity and wit. The most representative as well as popular of New England poems was Michael Wigglesworth's *Day of Doom* (1652), an extensive and fearful picture of the day when the last trumpet shall blow and God will judge saints and sinners according to the inexorable law of Calvin. This eminently edifying poem ran its full jigging length of two hundred and twenty-four eight-line stanzas in the old septenary ballad meter with interlinear rhymes, adorned by plentiful chapter-and-verse references in the margin to Biblical authority to authenticate its inviolable orthodoxy. About the same time there appeared *The Tenth Muse Lately sprung up in America, or Several Poems, compiled with great Variety of Wit and Learning, full of Delight* (London, 1650). These early poems of Anne Bradstreet form the first important body of verse written in America that deserves to be taken seriously as poetry, and the new edition (with additions, including her "contemplations"), which appeared in Boston in 1678, added considerably to her poetic stature. New heights were attained shortly after by Edward Taylor (1645?-1729) in his devotional and meditative verse, modeled upon such "sacred poets" as Herbert, Crashaw, and Quarles; but these remained in a four-hundred-page quarto manuscript until 1937, when their publication first made known the figurative brilliance and homely, native coloring of Taylor's poetry. Since then, much other early Puritan poetry has been found, and some of it has been published; but no poet has yet appeared to challenge seriously the position of Anne Bradstreet and Edward Taylor.

By the middle of the seventeenth century the Mather dynasty—Richard, 1596-1669, Increase, 1639-1723, Cotton, 1663-1728, and Samuel, 1706-1785—had their book factory in smooth running order. Richard, the first of the American Mathers, had to his credit sermons, a catechism, a treatise on justification, public letters on church government, several controversial documents, the preface to the *Bay Psalm Book*, and many of the marvels of metrical transliteration contained in that volume. His

son Increase outdid the father to the extent that an authentic list of his writings runs to well-nigh one hundred and fifty titles. These sweep the entire circuit of themes, sacred and profane, that employed the thoughts of men in those days—divinity, ethics, casuistry, church government, law, English and American politics, history, heresy, prophecy, demonology, angelology, crime, poverty, ignorance, dancing, the Indian question, earthquakes, comets, winds, conflagrations, drunkenness, and the smallpox. Unfortunately, he is better known today for his *Essay for the Recording of Illustrious Providences* (1684) and *Cases of Conscience Concerning Evil Spirits* (1693), in both of which his scholarship and learning suffer from the credulity of his time, rather than for his histories of the Indian wars or his defenses of the political rights of New England.

His son Cotton, in his turn, outdid the father in like proportion, making good the old epitaph composed for the founder of the clan:

Under this stone lies Richard Mather,  
Who had a son greater than his father,  
And eke a grandson greater than either.

Of great learning and even greater industry, he wrote prodigiously. His bibliography exceeds four hundred titles, besides other works left in manuscript at his death. Living at a time when it was still possible to take all learning for one's province, his range of interests was truly universal, and it would be difficult to find a field that he did not touch. His monumental *Magnalia Christi Americana* ("Christ's Great Achievements in America"), begun in 1693, completed four years later, and published in two large volumes in 1702, is justly esteemed his greatest work.

The cumulative tendency toward intellectual intensity and literary productivity noticeable in the Mathers was arrested after the first three generations. Samuel achieved respectable fame as an author and Congregational clergyman, but the fire of the Mathers, finding little fuel during the mid-years of the eighteenth century, burned itself out. The new order considered the Mathers anachronistic.

Meanwhile a long tradition of diary-keeping and journal-writing resulted in a series of noteworthy productions in that kind of composition, beginning with Mrs. Mary Rowlandson's *Narrative of the Captivity* (1682), which she suffered at the hands of the Indians in 1675/6, and Sarah Kemble Knight's *Journal*, containing a sprightly account of her experiences and observations during a journey on horseback



made through the back country from Boston to New York in October, 1704, and the return trip the following March. But the American classics in this type of writing are the work of Samuel Sewall of Boston, Colonel William Byrd of Virginia, and John Woolman the Quaker.

Samuel Sewall (1652-1730) led a full life as a lawyer, judge, capitalist, and village potentate, but found time to write a number of tracts, including *The Selling of Joseph* (1700), an eloquent protest against slavery. However, it is in his *Diary*, covering, with some omissions, the years from 1674 to 1729, though it was not published until 1878-1882, that he wrote most engagingly. Not designed for publication, his *Diary* is written entirely without pretense, and gives an authentic picture of Puritan society and of the Judge himself as the embodiment of the rising Yankeeism of his day, mercenary but kindly, conventional but vigorous, often short-sighted but always solid.

Down at Westover, Virginia, the courtly Colonel William Byrd (1674-1744) wrote, in *The History of the Dividing Line*, a remarkable and witty account of his experiences while surveying the boundary line between North Carolina and Virginia in 1728, and subsequently, *A Journey to the Land of Eden* and *A Progress to the Mines*, both descriptive of trips which he made to his extensive land holdings in western Virginia. But it is in his diary, or *Secret History*, which has been discovered only recently and parts of which still remain in manuscript, that we get the most interesting glimpses into the life of a cultivated Southern planter and man of affairs, and much else besides of equal interest to the student of literature and of history.

Finally, there is the calm record of the quietist, John Woolman (1720-1772), whose itinerant career as a disciple of the benevolent spirit comes to life in the simple words of his *Journal* (1774). Diary-keeping and autobiographical writing did not end here. Indeed, the records of Sewall, Byrd, and Woolman are but the preludes to the journals and notebooks of Emerson and Thoreau, Hawthorne and Longfellow. The motif persisted through Jonathan Edwards' *Personal Narrative* and Crèvecoeur's *Letters from an American Farmer* (1782), many of which have a distinctively personal and autobiographical tone, to come to full-bodied glory in Benjamin Franklin's *Autobiography*, begun in 1771, and left incomplete at his death. But with Franklin, we reach another phase in the development of American civilization and literary culture, concerning which a few words of explanation are in order.

#### THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY: REVOLT AND REORGANIZATION

As the fine fervor of seventeenth-century Puritanism burned low, the process of secularization grew apace. Growing trade and expanding commerce hastened the movement, and stalwarts like Samuel Sewall, while still vitally concerned about insuring for themselves the benefits accruing to the elect in the future life, were nevertheless careful to put money into their pockets for use in this life. The spirit of middle-class mercantilism, sharp trading and hard bargaining, and a preoccupation with worldly affairs bred a spirit of Yankeeism, a practical, realistic concern with temporal affairs that turned men's minds increasingly away from the spiritual promises of Heaven toward the solid remunerations of earthly competence, security, and position. Meanwhile, the hold of the Church on the people fell in proportion as the clergy lost control. The insistence on the part of the British government from the time of William and Mary onward that toleration be extended to all Protestants, and the substitution of property qualifications for church membership as determining citizenship cut the ground from under the theocrats. Still, the old order might have survived even these crippling blows if the people could have been held in line. But the people fell away fast as they took up the infectious ideas of rationalism as these developed under the auspices of Newtonian conceptions of the universe and the Lockean psychology.

Although Cotton Mather testified proudly in 1728, the year of his death, that he did not know "among all the Pastors of the Two Hundred Churches . . . one Arminian, much less an Arian," he neglected to say that while the pulpit was still relatively pure, the subtle poison of rationalism, under the disguise of Arminianism, was spreading rapidly among the masses. The fundamental tenet of Arminianism was to assert that the elect of God are not pre-chosen, but that a righteous life and good works are sufficient to lead men into the way to salvation. Striking, as this doctrine did, at the very taproot of Calvinism by denying the principle of determinism, while insisting on the free will of man, it went even further in its social implications than in its purely theological applications.

It was an expression of the idea of individual responsibility to God—in short, an extension of Luther's doctrine of the right of individual interpretation of the Scripture, to throw upon the individual the whole responsibility of asserting his free will not only in making his peace with God but also

in negotiating the terms of government on the earth.

In England, rationalism had already passed from Arminianism through a phase of Arianism, which cast doubt upon Christ as a necessary Savior, to Socinianism, which openly denied his divinity altogether—doctrines that ultimately became popular in America in terms of Tom Paine's brand of deism and New England Transcendentalism. Eventually all religious doctrine that rested on faith, including the super-rational, supernatural, and miraculous elements of Christianity as described in the Bible, came under the attack of this critically rational spirit. Wherever English rationalism showed the way, American deism or Unitarianism followed. Even in Cotton Mather's day, incipient rationalism had begun to ask disturbing questions, and Mather himself went to some pains, in *The Christian Philosopher: A Collection of the Best Discoveries of Nature, with Religious Improvements* (1721), to meet the attack of science and reason on their own grounds. By the time of Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758) it had grown aggressive. Dogma was face to face with rationalism; and orthodoxy, definitely on the defensive, was ill-equipped for the impending battle. The man in the street may have known little about the highly technical theological and metaphysical issues involved; but when he came to weigh the assertions of the dogmatic school against those of the rationalists, the latter appeared to have the better of the argument.

The doctrine of total depravity, for instance, seemed not to tally with the daily observations of the common man. In the corrupt world of Augustine or Calvin, the common brutality of the times might have had a reasonable explanation in such a doctrine—namely, that the evils of society originate in the evil hearts of men. But in the village world of New England the doctrine began to lose its social sanction as the honest citizens appraised themselves and their neighbors. Under the spell of a Mather's or an Edwards' Sunday preaching, they may have believed the human heart to be wholly depraved; but in the everyday life of the New England village, dominated as it was by rugged virtues, kindness, and moral integrity, they were led to wonder whether they and their neighbors were indeed vipers and worms, brutally wallowing in sin, hated of God and man. The conviction grew that they were not altogether vicious; and as they pondered this thought, they experienced mounting difficulties in reconciling their Sunday professions with their week-day experience. Although many continued to repeat their familiar church creed, their sanction of the formal

profession of faith was lost as the authority of dogma fell before the voice of experience, reason, and common sense.

Moreover, many of the reading and thinking members of New England society became acquainted with the theories of John Locke, who taught that man, instead of coming into the world freighted with innate or inborn ideas and weighed down by an inherited load of sin, was born with a mind entirely blank. Hence, everything that subsequently entered into man's mind, all his desires, all his acts, were the result of influences upon the human mind after birth. All that man ever learned came to him originally through the five senses—through experience and through the influence upon him of the manifold effects of environment, education, conditioning. If man is born without sin, and becomes a sinner later, it is his environment—earthly institutions and social conventions—that is to be blamed. Thus the idea that "in Adam's fall, we sinned all" became a meaningless one. The natural man, instead of being naturally wicked, is naturally good. This doctrine, supported by the Lockean psychology, received during the eighteenth century an important impetus and support from the ideas emanating from France. Rousseau pictured men as originally and intrinsically good while they dwelt in the original, primitive state of nature, but that they were corrupted through the evils of civilization, which resulted from the perversion of the social contract. This doctrine appealed to men whose daily experience taught them the falseness of traditional dogma. Moreover, Rousseau's ideals of liberty and equality came home with special meaning to men bred in villages and on the frontier. Thus the Rousseauistic glorification of the simple, the primitive, and the natural joined forces with the rationalism of the Newtonian and Lockean tradition to influence the liberalizing trend of American theology, leading, on the one hand, to a romantic concept by which the orderliness of Nature and finally Nature herself become the worshipful objects of man, and reason the proper guide to natural, as opposed to revealed, religion; while, on the other hand, it encouraged opposition to artificial control and traditional authority and thus hastened the American revolution against the governmental absolutism of England.

In a very similar way another cardinal doctrine of Calvinism, that of special election, was discredited. In an aristocratic society it seemed natural to believe that God had set men apart in classes. But as the leveling processes of a democratic land tended to destroy social distinctions, the new individualism un-

dermined the old class psychology. Geographical separation from England favored the development of colonial autonomy and democratic government. Colonial America presents no more consistently straightforward movement than that of self-determinism. As the common man freed himself from political absolutism, he became dissatisfied with theological absolutism; the right to achieve religious salvation is a natural corollary to the right to win social distinction. That one's future lay wholly beyond the reach of one's will, that it rested entirely within the hands of an arbitrary God who gave or withheld salvation at His pleasure, regardless of what the individual might do about it—these were doctrines as utterly at variance with the growing ideals of democracy as was the assumption that Britain had the right to meddle with the internal affairs of citizens in America or arbitrarily to levy taxes and to prescribe rules governing trade.

Indeed, as thinking Americans of the eighteenth century from John Wise, John Barnard, and Jonathan Mayhew to Benjamin Franklin, Tom Paine, and Thomas Jefferson contemplated the issues involved in British sovereignty and absolutism, the divine-rights-of-kings theory, and related principles and theories of state, it became clear that the doctrine of determinism was the crux of their problem, just as the theologians, contemplating the future of the Church, realized that as the decision went for or against determinism, so would the entire metaphysical structure of Calvinism and Puritanism stand or fall.

When the call of distress went out from the churches, and Jonathan Edwards came to the rescue, it was to this problem of a free *versus* a determined will that he directed his mental energies. Edwards' mind, rated by one prominent historian of American philosophy as the finest yet produced in America, focused upon this question, and produced the *magnum opus* of his distinguished career in *The Freedom of the Will* (1754). While he did not prove that the will of man is determined, he demonstrated, by all the laws of logic, that it could not be free, thus leaving no alternative but the conclusion that it must be fixed by the will of God. Starting from the assumptions that he made, and employing the syllogistic method that he adopted, he reached conclusions that seemed irrefutable. But however rigorous his method or unshakable his conclusions, the book failed to achieve its primary purpose of arresting the critically rational tendencies of the age or of re-enthroning God as a sufficient and arbitrary determiner of all things, including the will of man. Logic might be logic, the common people admitted, but they re-

mained unconvinced nevertheless, holding instead with Dr. Samuel Johnson that while all logic and philosophy were against the theory of a free will, all experience and common sense were for it. Edwards made a last-ditch stand for the conservative forces of Puritanism. It proved incapable of arresting (1) the progress of the Newtonian concept of an orderly, systematic universe, governed by immutable natural laws, to the discovery of which the reason was considered a sufficient index; (2) the deistic criticism of revealed religion as distinguished from natural religion; (3) the Unitarian deposition of a personal, triune God for *one* God, synonymous with order, harmony, reason, or moral law; (4) the attendant French romantic doctrines of the natural man and of the state of nature as naturally good; and (5) the corollary doctrine of the inherent natural rights of all men as distinct from the special privileges of the elect, as predetermined by divine ordinance. In drawing lightning from heaven, to demonstrate that it was electricity, Franklin robbed God of much of His awe-inspiring quality among men—lightning was no longer a manifestation of God's wrath, but a perfectly natural phenomenon. The eighteenth-century man, searching for the religious and practical principles that should guide him, became convinced that God worked less by special providences than by general laws, and that His wishes were more readily ascertainable by the simple laws of logic than by the mysterious edicts of revelation. The idea gained ground that God Himself was order and law, Himself subject to His own ordained natural and moral laws.

Thus faith and revelation fell before the attack of reason and nature, and liberal individualism triumphed over theological authoritarianism. The next point of attack was political authority. For, as the seventeenth century was predominantly concerned with theological issues, the eighteenth (especially the latter half) turned with all-absorbing interest to political issues. To contrast Jonathan Edwards with Benjamin Franklin is to illustrate the change that took place in the temper of men's thinking. Edwards failed to save Calvinism, and 1754 signalized the end of the religious era. Franklin, as one of the prime movers behind the establishment of political independence and democratic republicanism, came to be known as the "First American." His success illustrates the triumph of the eighteenth-century temperament over that of the seventeenth—the assertion of natural rights over inherited rights, of Yankeeism over Puritanism, of this-worldliness over other-worldliness.

To be sure, Franklin did not win the victory single-handedly. Behind Franklin there stood more than two centuries during which a tradition of local self-determination had developed. The practice of self-government had evolved during the early seventeenth century among colonists who could not, and would not, send three thousand miles for royal sanction every time some local crisis arose. This long schooling in local self-government and the attendant development of independence of thought and action in a frontier and democratic society had, by the middle of the eighteenth century, bred a spirit of self-reliance and self-assertion among the colonies that would have balked at a Stamp Act and other arbitrary decrees even if they had never heard about the abstract theories of the natural rights of man. As it was, the home-grown tradition of freedom and liberty to arrange their own affairs combined with English and French ideas of political liberalism to raise voices in support of Franklin—men like the Adamses, James Otis and Patrick Henry, John Dickinson and Francis Hopkinson, Tom Paine and Thomas Jefferson. Among them, they produced a literature of political dissent and revolt that often rises above the usual literary level of purely polemical writing.

Soon after independence was won, Hamilton, Madison, and Jay penned *The Federalist* (1787-1788), a series of essays on the proposed Constitution of the United States that not only turned the tide to win its adoption by a majority of the states but demonstrated to the world that "Americans could write prose as well as any English-speaking people in the world."

The chief penman of these papers was Alexander Hamilton (1757-1804). After a brilliant career as pamphleteer and soldier during the Revolutionary War, he took a prominent part during the period between the Peace and the formation of the Union in the government of the states under the Confederation. The loose organization of the Confederation and the attendant dissension, turmoil, and insecurity intensified his advocacy of a strong centralized government. As a member of the Constitutional Convention, he was dissatisfied with the document as drawn, but in the *Federalist* papers he strongly advocated its ratification as the best Constitution possible at the time. A disciple of law and order, he set himself, as first Secretary of the Treasury, to institute principles and procedures to insure regularity, strength, and stability of government. In a series of cogently written reports he advocated (1) the federal assumption of state debts, (2) the refunding of

both national and state debts at par, (3) the levying of an excise tax to provide revenues for the government, (4) the establishment of a bank of the United States, modeled on the national Bank of England, and (5) the imposition of a protective tariff for military self-sufficiency, for the preservation of a home market, for agrarian products, and for the encouragement of American manufacturing. These measures, known as the Hamiltonian system, tended toward the strengthening of the federal government at the expense of state governments and toward the alliance of the government with the moneyed interests. Opposed to these principles were the agrarians, the disciples of state rights, and the more politically and social liberal elements of American society whom Jefferson sought to organize into an effective party of opposition to the Hamiltonians, or Federalists.

Like Tom Paine, Jefferson was the advocate of liberty, natural rights, and the common man; but unlike him, he retained his influence to the end, becoming the visible embodiment of the democratic ideal and the leader of the masses, who elevated him to the presidency of the United States in the faith that he would curb the growth and power of aristocracy and special privilege in the new democracy. A man of extraordinary breadth and versatility, he was alive to all the interests of his time. A Virginia gentleman of culture and attainments, he won distinction as a lawyer, agriculturist, inventor, educator, writer, architect, philologist, scientist, philosopher, economist, historian, sociologist, diplomat, and statesman. During his lifetime he disputed with Hamilton the empire of American political opinion; he was in his time the acknowledged head, as he remains today the perpetual symbol, of the democratic spirit of America.

From the beginning of his legislative career in Virginia he sided with the patriot party and led the protest against British-colonial policies. As lawmaker and later as governor of Virginia (1779-1781), he pushed a broad program of reform, designed to put into practice the broad principles which, in 1776, he incorporated in the Declaration of Independence. His codification and modernization of the laws of Virginia included legislation designed to make impossible the maintenance of a landed aristocracy and an established church. He advocated reforms in education and the establishment of a complete state free-school system, wrote the statute for religious freedom in Virginia, sponsored measures designed to promote economic equality, agitated for the abolition of slavery, and advocated other humanitarian principles.

At the age of thirty-two he became, in June of 1775, the youngest member of the Continental Con-

gress. While he seldom spoke on the floor of Congress, he established himself at once as being always "prompt, frank, explicit, and decisive upon committee and in convention," and within five days of taking his seat, he was chosen, with Benjamin Franklin and John Adams, to draft a reply to Lord North. Next, he was appointed, with John Dickinson, to draw up a *Declaration of the Causes and Necessity of Taking Up Arms*. And when it became apparent that the Congress would soon be debating the momentous resolution—"that these United Colonies are, and of right ought to be, free and independent States; that they are absolved from all allegiance to the British crown; and that all political connection between them and the state of Great Britain is, and ought to be, totally dissolved"—young Jefferson, receiving the largest number of votes, was put at the head of a committee to draft the Declaration of Independence. Associated with him were Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, Roger Sherman, and Robert Livingston. The actual writing was done by Jefferson, although corrections were made by Franklin, Adams, and the Congress at large.

During the war years Jefferson devoted himself mainly to the government of Virginia. During 1783-84 he was a delegate to the Congress of the Confederation. From 1784 to 1789 he served as American minister to France, succeeding Franklin, and in 1784 he printed (in Paris, for private distribution) his *Notes on the State of Virginia*. He traveled extensively in Europe, associated with moderate leaders of the French Revolution, and studied the temper of the French people. As a man who declared, "I have sworn upon the altar of God eternal hostility against every form of tyranny over the mind of man," he watched with sympathy the mounting spirit of freedom and republicanism among the French, meanwhile gathering lasting impressions and forming political opinions which his Anglophile, or pro-English, opponents later attacked as Galliophile, or pro-French, and therefore subversive and anarchical.

Returning to America in 1790, and becoming Secretary of State during Washington's first administration, he was alarmed to see that during his absence movements and tendencies had developed which ran counter to the spirit for which the Revolution had been fought. Under the influence of Alexander Hamilton as Secretary of the Treasury, Jefferson saw vast powers being centralized in the federal government and a rising power of aristocracy and privilege developing among those in control. Fearing that the United States was "galloping fast into monarchy," he openly and secretly opposed Hamilton until, at

the meetings of Washington's Cabinet, the two resembled "two cocks in a pit." The feud at length grew even beyond Washington's power to curb, and Jefferson withdrew from the Cabinet in 1793 to organize the people's party of opposition to Hamiltonian Federalism.

Having an implicit faith in the common man, the efficacy of a democracy resting on a free yeomanry, and an economy based on the produce of labor in the earth, Jefferson was a disciple of the Physiocratic school of social economics, emphasizing the principle of *laissez faire* and an agrarian, instead of a capitalistic, economy. He was little concerned about stable government, but was anxious that government should be responsive to the popular will. He denied the right of the past, in terms of tradition, or form, or money, to rule the present. He asserted that government, like all institutions, must accommodate itself to the demands of modernity, lest it become ossified and tyrannical. For the maintenance of good government, he believed that a bit of blood-letting could be very efficacious: "What signify a few lives lost in a century or two? The tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time, with the blood of patriots and tyrants." He held that a government grown strong and enriched by excessive revenue will only encourage ambition in its administrators in a way eventually to endanger the rights of men. He saw in the capitalistic order of Hamilton a nursery of potential plutocrats, and he remarked acidly that he had never observed "men's honesty to increase with their riches." As he watched Chief Justice John Marshall, who regarded the Supreme Court as an instrument of national unity and of federal power above state rights, handing down decisions and judicial interpretations that nullified the laws passed by Congress, thus giving the judiciary extensive legislative powers, Jefferson repudiated the idea of a strong Supreme Court as necessary for the preservation of justice. What was needed to cure the ills of democracy, he believed, was not more power in high places, but more democracy.

Seeing in the Hamilton program only "Toryism in disguise," ambitious to build a rigorous federal machine by which to establish monarchical absolutism, and thus to override and nullify the democratic will and to destroy the common interests, Jefferson proceeded so well in his organization of the opposition party that by 1796 he narrowly missed defeating John Adams for the presidency. Having received the second highest number of votes, he became Vice-President. Four years later, after a campaign of unequalled bitterness and acrimony, the powers of an

insurgent democracy swept the Federalist party aside, and Thomas Jefferson became the third President of the United States.

During Jefferson's two terms in office (1801-1809) the territorial area of the United States was doubled by the purchase of the Louisiana Territory, the national debt was reduced while taxes were decreased and the internal prosperity of the nation mounted manifold, the Lewis and Clark expedition explored the West, the menace of the Tripolitan pirates was eliminated, and a war with France was honorably averted. He was also responsible for the Non-Importation and Embargo Acts which, though designed to prevent foreign depredations against American industry and commerce, worked disastrous hardships in some quarters of the country. However, he succeeded in keeping his party in power through the administrations of Madison and Monroe, while making himself as thoroughly hated among Federalists as Lincoln was ever despised by Southerners during the Civil War.

In 1809 he retired to private life at Monticello to devote himself to scientific and philanthropic pursuits and to the cultivation of the arts. The sale in 1812 of his library of 10,000 choice volumes to the government resulted in the establishment of the Library of Congress. While opposing the encroachments of governmental power in all other respects, he urged an extension of state powers to provide a system of public education, and he devoted the years from 1814 to 1819 principally to the establishment of the Virginia school system, taking especial interest and pride in the building and establishment of the University of Virginia. He died on July 4, 1825, on the fiftieth anniversary of American Independence. On his tombstone is inscribed the epitaph (found among his papers) attesting his three great services to the cause of freedom and democracy:

Here lies buried  
THOMAS JEFFERSON

Author of the Declaration of Independence,  
of the Statute of Virginia for Religious Freedom,  
and Father of the University of Virginia.

The opposition between Hamiltonian and Jeffersonian, between Federalist and Republican, forces provoked a gigantic struggle that ran its rancorous course throughout the nineties and well beyond. Both parties solicited the ablest and most practiced pens available. In the flood of polemical satire, harangue, and invective which the controversy engendered, many an inexperienced writer learned to

sharpen his wit. The contest produced few significant examples of writing that exhibit a high degree of purely literary excellence, and it diverted a number of men from the gentler pursuit of polite literature into that of controversy. Trumbull and Dwight, for example, could not resist entering the fray on the side of conservatism and Federalism, while Freneau was in the thick of it from the very beginning on the side of Jefferson and republicanism. But once the issues were decided, the air was cleared, and writers with literary inclinations returned to pursue a more distinctively literary vein. The Hartford Wits, for example, resumed their ambitious designs of creating a body of national poetry. All too often this desire to write verse that should be commensurate with the grandeur of the new nation turned out to be ponderous and grandiloquent. Meanwhile Freneau retired to Mount Pleasant, rededicated himself to the poetic muse, and prepared a collected edition of his poems, which won him the title of "First American Poet." As a transitional figure between the Age of Reason and the Romantic Age, he wrote much poetry that still expresses the concepts of eighteenth-century rationalism in the language and conventions of a neo-classical era; but his best work looks forward to the Romantic Age that came to fruition, about the time of his death, under the aegis of poets like Bryant, Poe, Emerson, and Longfellow, and prose writers like Irving and Cooper.

#### LITERARY NATIONALISM AND THE RISE OF ROMANTICISM

As would be expected, the development of political nationalism following the Revolution was attended by a rapidly growing consciousness of literary nationalism, the cumulative tendency of which can be traced throughout the writings of the men who are today accounted the leading spirits of the time. The tendency is notable in the ambitious and concerted efforts of the Hartford Wits to cultivate polite literature. They were often deflected from the course of pure literature by the clash of social forces and conflicting political ideas of the day, but their interminable epics were nevertheless ardently nationalistic attempts to provide their country with a body of epical poetry befitting the birth of a great nation. As the poet of the American Revolution, Philip Freneau devoted much of his time to satire directed against the British, and during the Hamilton-Jefferson debate his productions were heavy with political controversy. But aside from this and his tendency toward rational moralization, he often turned to the purer strain of *belles-lettres*, and with such pieces as "The

Wild Honeysuckle" and his Indian poems earned the title of "Father of American Poetry." Besides these versifiers, there were others who chose the drama and the novel as their media by which to help America to literary maturity.

The drama, formally introduced in 1752 by Lewes Hallam's professional company brought over from London, made its way only slowly against religious and temperamental opposition to playhouses and actors, and the production of original plays in America was retarded not only by the common colonial tendency of depending up the mother country but also by the difficulty that native playwrights experienced in trying to compete with the established European dramatists. The interposition of the long and all-absorbing Revolutionary War years interrupted the progress that had been made; for the Continental Congress, in its efforts to "encourage frugality, economy and industry, and to promote agriculture, arts and manufactures," found it expedient to "discountenance every species of extravagance and dissipation, especially all horse-racing, and all kinds of gaming, cock-fighting, exhibitions of shews, plays, and other expensive diversions and entertainments." Even after the war, restrictions and proscriptions of one sort or another operated to keep acting companies more or less in the status of vagrancy until, toward the end of the century, the construction of the first permanent theatres gave them a home and some professional stability. Even so, plays like *Othello* and *The School for Scandal* had to creep in surreptitiously under the disarming guise of "moral lectures" or "concerts," while the theatres themselves were ingeniously called by such names as "Historic Academy" or "Academy of Music." In Pennsylvania the law prohibiting plays remained in effect until 1787, and the order of the General Court of Massachusetts in 1750 against play acting stood until 1781, after which time it became safe openly to enact plays in moral Boston.

Under such circumstances it is surprising that the first regular American play, in the sense that it was written by an American and produced by a professional acting company, should have been written as early as 1759 and enacted for the first time in 1767. This was *The Prince of Parthia*, a romantic tragedy, rather exotic in theme and derivative in inspiration, by Thomas Godfrey of Philadelphia. The first regular comedy followed in 1787—a play by Royall Tyler, entitled *The Contrast*. Besides being a play of considerable dramatic merit, its contrast of Englishmen and Americans to the advantage of the latter makes it a notable expression of the rising tide

of national literary consciousness of that day. William Dunlap (1766–1839) catered to the same taste in *The Father; or, American Shandyism* (produced in 1788), and his *Andre* (produced in 1798) is a play utilizing events of the Revolutionary period of American history. Talented as a writer and especially as an adapter of plays, Dunlap was also a capable theatre manager. Although he went bankrupt in 1804, he left the American theatre in a position beyond which his successors, generally less capable than he, were enabled to carry on in good style.

The novel encountered many of the same obstacles that the drama had to overcome, and at approximately the same time. Aside from the general cultural lag in America, native novelists had to compete against the better productions of European novelists, whose works, in the absence of international copyright, could be pirated and consequently sold for greater profit than could the native product. But it was the prejudice of the piously moral and realistically frugal-minded populace that was chiefly to be overcome, as well as the wealthier and more influential Tory-minded group of Americans who withheld their support of a native art when, as they argued, they could have better reading by importing their novels from abroad. America, they held, contained no fit material for literary treatment: the country was too young, too raw; the democratic way of life put everything and everyone on a dead level of mediocrity; there were no romantic legends, no age-old superstitions, no "high-life" for the novelist to portray. To be sure, there were the Indians, but, as one critic put it, "a novel describing these miserable barbarians, their squaws and paposes, would not be very interesting." Hence, until the program of literary nationalism got fairly started, some of the earlier novelists felt themselves called upon to apologize for using native characters, scenes, and events.

As would be expected, the first American novels were highly imitative of the novels of Richardson, whose *Pamela* (1740) had set the pattern for the epistolary form, its sentimental motivation, and its stilted and florid elegance of style. The first noteworthy American novel is *The Power of Sympathy* (1789), long ascribed to Sarah Wentworth Morton, but now generally attributed to William Hill Brown. It follows rather precisely the vain sensibility, high-flying sentimentality, and moralizing tendencies of Richardson, involving an attempted seduction, a change of heart, and an eminently satisfying marriage. *Charlotte Temple: a Tale of Truth* (1704) by Susanah Rowson is, like *The Power of Sympathy*, a tale of seduction, but it adds also the theme of desertion,



following which there are dire results for all concerned. It was particularly designed "for the perusal of the young and thoughtful of the fair sex." Its tremendous popularity, indicated by the 161 editions through which the book has gone, was owing largely to its reputation as a true story. All early novelists made a great point of the truth of their stories. Fiction, they knew, was inadmissible and banned. The third notable example of the American novel is Hannah Foster's anonymously published *Coquette* (1797). Epistolary in form, like the others, it is, like them also, reputedly a true story, based on the life of a distant relative of the author, named Eliza Wharton, who was allegedly seduced by Jonathan Edwards' son Pierrepont. Still conventionally moral, it is less sensationally sentimental than its predecessors, and excels them also in character portrayal.

Such was the state of the American novel when Royall Tyler, following his success in the drama with native materials, turned his attention to fiction in *The Algerine Captive* (1797), written in a more realistic tone, using native matter, and pointedly insisting, in the preface, upon a substitution of "home-spun" materials for the supernumerary horrors of the Gothic novels and the moral sentimentality of the school of sensibility. Henry Hugh Brackenridge (1748-1816), the author of several long poems designed to demonstrate the rising glory of America, also wrote a satirical back-country novel, called *Modern Chivalry* (1792-1805), to inculcate principles, manners, and mores consonant with his ideas of a democratic society. Even Charles Brockden Brown (1771-1810) turned aside, for the better half of his novels, from the Gothic and sentimental motifs prescribed by English and Continental models, to work on indigenous materials. And Noah Webster (1758-1843), the "Schoolmaster to America," devoted his linguistic talents to justifying and standardizing the American language as distinct from English precedent. He campaigned for the right of Americans to develop their own linguistic tradition, insisting that "America must be as independent in *literature* as she is in politics, as famous for *arts* as for *arms*." This argument was carried forward by William Ellery Channing in his *Remarks on American Literature* (1830), Emerson's call for literary independence a few years later, Lowell's reinforcement of the same idea, and Whitman's illustration in 1855 of what could be done in that direction.

During the early decades of the nineteenth century the United States of America were experiencing the pangs of growing pains. Expansion came so fast that it left Americans, no less than Europeans, gasp-

ing. Between the adoption of the Constitution in 1789 and the close of the century, three new states—Vermont, Kentucky, and Tennessee—were added to the original thirteen. In 1802 Ohio was admitted to the Union, and the next year the vast Louisiana Territory was acquired. Louisiana became a state in 1812, and during the six years between 1816 and 1821 six more states were incorporated—Indiana, Illinois, Mississippi, Alabama, Maine, and Missouri. The acrid factionalism represented by the Hamiltonian and Jeffersonian parties, while not forgotten, however much transmutation and realignment the parties had undergone, was appreciably toned down as the strength and promise of the new country gained on the imagination of the people. Rivalries and jealousies, hangovers of the old colonial exclusiveness and provincial economy, grew weaker as the idea of state sovereignty faded before the larger conception of a great republic already well on its way to stretch from sea to sea. The opening of the fertile Mississippi Valley vastly enlarged the national agricultural productivity, which, in turn, reacted on trade and manufacturing, not only in the old settled regions but in the new West. Bostonians, recalling that it had required two centuries for their native city to grow from fifty inhabitants to thirty thousand, were amazed to see Cincinnati after a scant half-century of existence, very nearly equal the population of the Hub of the Universe of some one hundred and seventy thousand in 1860. The vision of a Manifest Destiny, to which the Lewis and Clark expedition of 1804-1806 had given a new impetus, became a reality far more quickly than even the most exuberant expansionists had anticipated. Internal canals, railroads and highways, the steamboat, and new inventions like the reaper, the cotton gin, and the telegraph, put to speedy use by an eager, pushing, progressive spirit, helped create a new empire out of the vast West, South, and Southwest. By the thirties, thoughtful men were warning that material growth was outrunning cultural development, that things were in the saddle riding mankind, and that the new nation was fast becoming, in Irving's phrase, the "Land of the Almighty Dollar."

All however, was not given over to quantity. Some there were who stressed quality. The public-school system was extended as fast as the concentration of population permitted, and often liberal appropriations of land were made to support popular education. Educators like Horace Mann and Henry Barnard were beginning to put order into instructional methods. To the thirty colleges existing in 1810, seven permanent institutions were added by 1821.



and before 1830 twelve more were founded. Outmoded curricula were revised, and the advantages of a collegiate education were made more readily available to all classes. Outside the colleges considerable progress was made in the popularization of knowledge. The three hundred printing presses existing in 1800 were more than trebled during the first quarter of the nineteenth century, to supply American readers with approximately thirty per cent of their current books, the others being imported chiefly from England. Despite this large dependence upon Europe, it is estimated that some 50,000 titles of all kinds bearing an American imprint were issued from American presses during the first three decades of the century. Whereas 376 newspapers in 1810 circulated 22,321,000 copies annually, by 1828 some 850 periodicals boasted an annual issue of 68,117,971 copies, thus increasing the copies per person from 3.8 to 13.8. Intellectuals and writers were beginning to find some popular support, and the government notably during the administration of John Quincy Adams, began to advocate governmental support to intellectual interests, although it was long before anything much more substantial was done than to reward literary ability with custom-house positions or diplomatic appointments. Meanwhile institutions like the Massachusetts Historical Society (founded in 1791), the American Academy of Arts in New York (1802), the Boston Athenaeum (1807), the American Antiquarian Society (1812), the Library of Congress (1815), mercantile and apprentices' library associations, museums, and art galleries were being instituted; magazines like the *North American Review*, founded in 1815, exerted a powerful cultural influence; and the popular lyceum, combining entertainment with instruction, was well on its way to success by 1825. By that time Irving had scored a popular success with *Knickerbocker's History of New York* in 1909, while *The Sketch Book* ten years later made him a literary figure of international reputation. Cooper had published *The Spy* in 1821 and *The Pilot* in 1824; *The Pioneers*, the first of the Leatherstocking Tales, had made its appearance the year before. Joseph Rodman Drake's promising poetic career had come to an untimely end by his death in 1820, but Fitz-Greene Halleck's *Fanny* (1819, expanded 1821) was a popular hit, and *Alnwick Castle* followed soon after. Bryant's "Thanatopsis" had appeared as early as 1817, and most of his best-known poems were familiar to many by 1825, when he went to New York City, soon to start his long and distinguished editorial career on the *New York Evening Post*.

American literary culture, it seemed to many, had come of age. Having twice defeated the British in trials at arms, Americans (so thought and said many of the more enthusiastic literary nationalists) would have no difficulty demonstrating their supremacy over effete Europeans if it came to a contest in the arts. This attitude bred a form of provincial bumptiousness and chauvinism which took extreme offense at the criticism and condescension displayed by British observers and travelers. Ill-feeling between Englishmen and Americans had mounted steadily since the days of the Revolution when Dr. Samuel Johnson, while avowing his readiness "to love all mankind, *except an American*," believed and said that Americans were "a race of convicts," who "ought to be thankful for anything . . . short of hanging" that the British chose to allow them. Americans like Charles Brockden Brown could say without fear of being misunderstood, "The cause why the intellectual soil of America is comparatively sterile . . . [is that] we do not cultivate it"; but any such opinions expressed by Englishmen were promptly ascribed to British envy or malice. The long-standing attitude of disdain and resentment expressed in British reviews and travel accounts was fanned to new intensity when America declared war on England at the very height of her struggle against Napoleon. The Americans, in their turn, considered the scurrilous attacks as evidence at once of a desire for revenge and of a wish to belittle everything American in a desperate attempt to stave off reform at home, to check further immigration to America, and to protect British markets against the competition of American enterprise. American charges that characterized British culture as decadently feudal goaded the British into charging Americans with execrable taste, unbounded vulgarity, unlimited bigotry, colossal ignorance, and to characterizing them as slave-flogging, materialistic, gross, undisciplined people, devoid of all elements of greatness. British criticism reached a new high in 1820, when Sidney Smith, writing in the *Edinburgh Review*, charged that "during the thirty or forty years of their independence" the Americans had done "absolutely nothing for the Sciences, for the Arts, for Literature, or even for the statesmanlike studies of Politics or Political Economy." He wound up his tirade saying that he wanted to know—

In all the four quarters of the globe, who reads an American book, or goes to an American play? or looks at an American picture or statue? What does the world yet owe to American physicians or surgeons? What new substance have their chemists discovered? or what old ones have they analyzed? What new constellations have been discovered by

the telescopes of Americans?—what have they done in the mathematics? . . . Finally, under which of the old tyrannical governments of Europe is every sixth man a Slave, whom his fellow-creatures may buy and sell and torture? When these questions are fairly and favourably answered, their laudatory epithets may be allowed.

In his high conceit the Reverend Sidney Smith could not have known (or he would hardly have laid himself open to becoming the laughing stock of later generations of Americans) that at that very moment a young man named Washington Irving was seeing through the press a series of papers called *The Sketch Book*, which not only Englishmen but all men were soon to read. While it may be freely admitted that there are elements of greatness in passages of the Declaration of Independence which men like Sidney Smith were congenitally incapable of appreciating, all Englishmen were prompt to recognize in *The Sketch Book* an account of old England ideally calculated, for both matter and manner, to find a warm place in their affections. William Godwin found in it everywhere "the marks of a mind of the utmost elegance and refinement," though he admitted that he had not been "exactly prepared" to look for those virtues in an American. Irving himself wrote, in the introduction to his next book:

It has been a matter of marvel to my European readers, that a man from the wilds of America should express himself in tolerable English. I was looked upon as something new and strange in literature.

What is fully as important as the excellent quality of Irving's writings is that he was the first man to inject good humor and common sense into the British-American cultural relations of the day. Himself the embodiment of geniality and graciousness, his book contained, besides its idyllic sketches of merry England and his inimitable Knickerbocker stories, an essay entitled "English Writers on America," in which he urged both sides to exercise fairness and forbearance, pointing out that no good could come from a continued literary animosity, fed by accusations and recriminations. Fond as he was of the old-world culture, he was also a patriotic American who did not neglect to tell the British that while they might be right in many of their charges, they were not very wise if they persisted in building up resentment against them among the people of a new nation who had all the good will in the world to be friendly. He reminded the British that while "the present friendship of America might be of little moment" to them, there could be no doubt about the future destiny of the new democracy, while over

England he saw lowering "some shadows of uncertainty." No intellectual giant and little given to worrying himself about public affairs, Irving nevertheless went on to add words strangely prophetic of what has twice happened, within the first half of the twentieth century, when Americans went to the rescue of England.

Should, then, a day of gloom arrive; should these reverses overtake her, from which the proudest empires have not been exempt; she may look back with regret at her infatuation, in repulsing from her side a nation she might have grappled to her bosom, and thus destroying her only chance for real friendship beyond the boundaries of her own dominions.

At the same time he told his own countrymen that the continuation of the quarrel was as senseless as spitting into the wind. American criticisms, he pointed out, never reached their mark because they were never republished in England, and accordingly served no other purpose than to foster a querulous and peevish temper among American writers, making "sour the sweet flow of our early literature." "What," he asked, "have we to do with national prejudices? They are the inveterate diseases of old countries, contracted in rude and ignorant ages, when nations knew little of each other, and looked beyond their own boundaries with distrust and hostility." Instead, he urged Americans freely to acknowledge European leadership in cultural attainments, while keeping England especially before their eyes as "a perpetual volume of reference" from which to derive valuable lessons. Thus, while taking care to "avoid the errors and absurdities which may have crept into the page, we may draw thence golden maxims of practical wisdom, wherewith to strengthen and to embellish our national character."

As the Ambassador of Good Will from the New to the Old World, Irving achieved a notable success in removing a good deal of the rancor and acrimony from the Anglo-American cultural controversy, but the ruffled temperaments of both nations were not calmed at once. English travelers continued to find us boorish in some ways; some of the remarks of Charles Dickens' *American Notes* of 1842 or of Matthew Arnold's *Impressions* of 1888 were hard to swallow. And as late as 1862, when the British-threatened intervention in the Civil War strained relations anew, Lowell complained, in the second series of the *Biglow Papers*, of the British facility "for the minding of other people's business." However, it is worth observing that by this time, although the matter in hand was one of deadly seriousness, Lowell's tone is

that of raillery rather than rancor. Americans had got over carrying chips on their shoulders and daring Europeans to knock them off. As solid artistic accomplishment allayed the discomfiture felt by earlier generations when weighing their achievements against their intentions and public professions, the self-conscious straining to realize at once their full, national, cultural potentialities subsided; the high-tension phase of forcing the artistic impulse passed, the overweening claims of the swaggerer and the braggart disappeared, and a natural efflorescence of American art followed.

Not the least of the causes contributing to this healthy change of attitude was the emergence of an American school of criticism. The most notable among the earlier native critics who judged American productions dispassionately, while criticizing sharply and insisting upon ever-higher standards of literary excellence was Edgar Allan Poe, editor of the *Southern Literary Messenger* in Richmond during the mid-thirties. He declared war on mediocrity, exposed it wherever and whenever he detected it, and deflated many literary personalities and reputations which American self-consciousness and an unacknowledged sense of cultural inferiority had overrated. He exposed imitation and plagiarism and demanded originality of conception and execution. He insisted upon the divorcement of aesthetics and morality and refused to regard as literary such productions as were avowedly didactic. By the time of his death in 1849, other critics were prepared to speak with assurance and authority, and writers and critics alike deferred less and less to foreign opinion and more to their own.

When Thoreau professed to having a greater desire to see Oregon than to visit Europe, and when Whitman disdained the "feudalistic" impulse that he saw expressed in Shakespeare, neither of them was directing any oblique remarks at England. Both were making simple statements of individual preference and of American self-sufficiency. In the further cultural development of America, England and Europe generally came to be relatively unimportant. Having all but come of age, America was deciding for herself, for better or worse, what her literary course should be. Today, knowing that she has nothing to fear from any comparison of her artistic creations with contemporary British productions, the condescending or supercilious comments a Somerset Maugham, for example, may choose to make (if only to show that old John Bull still affects the vacant stare that he cultivated in an earlier day when he could afford to be blunt or insular or insensible to the

feelings of others) create not a ripple in the American reviews; while the raillery of a George Bernard Shaw, however pointed the hit, is hugely enjoyed.

The history of this spirit of literary independence in America is no simple one. Artistic endeavor began exuberantly and boisterously soon after the Treaty of Paris. By 1800 it began to falter and show signs of discouragement, first, at the failure of America actively to support an incipient art, and, second, in the face of foreign criticism. During the first two decades of the new century it passed through an awkward, hobbled stage, uncertain of its own ability, half afraid to exert its own strength in opposition to convention and tradition, at one time deferring reverentially to authority, and at the next kicking fiercely at all restraint. During the twenties it began to get rid of its adolescence and the attendant growing pains, writers like Irving, Cooper, and Bryant showing the way. The thirties saw Emerson established as an essayist and lecturer, Longfellow as a poet, Poe as a poet and short-story writer and, what is more important for the development of the American literary temper, as a critic bent on enforcing high literary standards. By the forties the literary climate was prepared to entertain and accommodate the intellectual and social ferment that stirred men and women during the two decades immediately preceding the Civil War.

The result was what has been termed the American Renaissance of the mid-years of the nineteenth century—not so much a rebirth of what had previously existed in America as a birth, *i.e.*, the American way of producing a renaissance, "by coming to its first maturity and affirming its rightful heritage in the whole expanse of art and culture." We might designate the half-decade from 1850 to 1855 as marking the climax of this efflorescence. During that short period appeared a remarkable procession of books by five American writers then at the height of their powers—Emerson, Hawthorne, Melville, Thoreau, and Whitman. The books are *Representative Men* (1850), *The Scarlet Letter* (1850), *The House of the Seven Gables* (1851), *Moby Dick* (1851), *Pierre* (1852), *Walden* (1854), and *Leaves of Grass* (1855). Together they form a collection so distinguished for imaginative vitality that the whole range of American literature does not exhibit anything approaching it in any period of time twice as long. In searching for causes for this extraordinary flowering of literary art, we may consider the coming to fruition of romanticism, transcendentalism, and humanitarianism as among the major contributory factors.

As has been indicated, the American renaissance

under the guise of literary romanticism may be thought of as coming to a climax during the fifties, just before the dark clouds of the Civil War cast their shadows over America. But it must be borne in mind that this romanticism as a motivating force had a long history, going back to Irving, and beyond. Irving still stood half-way within the neo-classical tradition of the eighteenth century, while, for the other half, he followed in the wake of romanticism as exemplified by the antiquarianism of Scott, the popular lore of Germany, the Arabesque legends of Spain, and the localism of his own Knickerbocker region. By birth and rearing a patrician aristocrat, Cooper, too, retained many of the characteristics of the eighteenth century, but his investiture of the frontier and of Leatherstocking in an aura of myth and romance is a major contribution to the literature of romanticism. Bryant, in spite of his inevitable moralizing and frigid formalism, was the first in America to find the indwelling spirit in flower, stream, and forest, at the same time that he dwelt with romantic reverie and feeling on the themes of mutability, transience, and death. With the generation of Poe, Emerson, Margaret Fuller, Longfellow, Lowell, and Thoreau, the romantic spirit in America came to maturity.

Romanticism in the United States, as elsewhere, drew inspiration from many sources and manifested itself in numerous ways. In Poe's poems and stories, where the emphasis is less upon ideas, or intellectual content, than upon artistry, or literary execution, romanticism had its finest purely literary exemplification in America. Avowing the doctrine that the literary artist confines himself to the province of beauty and the cultivation of taste, he sought to create a poetic "ideality" in terms of mood, tone, impression, and atmosphere that included the singular, the bizarre, the grotesque, and the arabesque, and created a slender but successful body of lyric verse that remains unique and in many respects unrivaled.

On the other side were those who were more profoundly attracted to the ideas, the programs, and the reforms that were identified with romanticism. Their approach to romanticism, too, already had a long history, for it is to be recalled that ideologically the romantic temperament had drawn sustenance from Newton and Locke no less than from Rousseau and Paine. The revolt against theocracy dating back to the early years of the eighteenth century, when John Wise had argued the cause of independency and autonomy of separate church organization to establish the principle of Congregationalism, may be taken as the focal point from which to trace, through the regular processes of descent, a romantic revolt by

which Unitarianism grew out of Congregationalism, and Transcendentalism, in its turn, became the left-wing development of Unitarianism. In very much the same way the principle of political liberalism that fostered the American Revolution was extended, during the early years of our national life, into the political principles of the Jeffersonian party, and eventually into the Jacksonianism of the West. This twofold revolt in theology and in political theory antedated the romantic revolt in literature, while laying the foundations or groundwork that would nurture it, for it drew a large measure of support from both. But it derived also from other quarters—from the Wordsworthian concept of nature and the Coleridgean world of the visionary and the supernatural, from German transcendental thought and from French social theory, from American nationalism and from the spirit of humanitarianism that expressed a wide sympathy for all living things. Romanticism insisted on individualism, democracy, and the worth of the common man. It avowed the will of man to be free, the human heart essentially good, and human perfectibility possible. It glorified the simple, the elemental, and the natural. It sought expression in a liberation of the imagination, relief of the emotions, and freedom and variety of poetic form as a means to securing more adequate self-expression. It emphasized the very near and the far distant, the common and the exotic. It explored personality in terms of the subconscious, the dreamy, and the visionary. It saw each in all, and all in each; the miraculous in the common, and the divine in the human. It abominated scientific analysis, cold logic, and sterile formality; it aimed at color, warmth, sympathy. It extended tremendously the range of matter and form of poetry and gainsaid the traditional laws of restraint, decorum, and verisimilitude. It was for some a religion, for others a philosophy, or a social theory, or a literary creed. For some it was all these at once.

In New England, Transcendentalism became the philosophy and religion of romanticism. As first expounded by Immanuel Kant, Transcendentalism was a rigorously logical criticism of metaphysical method designed to explore the mental faculties of man and to mark the limits and validity of human knowledge. Of this epistemological system, most of the American Transcendentalists understood little and wanted less. But they appropriated the transcendental terminology and the transcendental definition of ideality, rejecting the knowledge of the Understanding as supplied by sensation and logic, meanwhile accepting the Ideas of the Reason, intuitively or immediately conceived. Into American Transcendentalism went portions of

Kant as well as of Plato, of Cousin no less than of Swedenborg, of Schleiermacher no less than of Dr. William Ellery Channing, of Quakerism and of Puritanism—with the result that the ideas of no two Transcendentalists were quite alike. Transcendentalism was liberal enough to include anybody who distrusted Lockean sensationalism and denied the efficacy of the human understanding to satisfy man, while affirming that the Reason, usually intuitively (or morally) interpreted, led directly to philosophical reality or spiritual verity. For many, Transcendentalism was mainly and primarily a form of idealism designed to halt the all-engrossing materialism to which America seemed on the verge of surrendering. They agreed with Emerson, the high priest of New England Transcendentalism, when he complained—

Things are in the saddle,  
And ride mankind;

or when he went on to explain that—

There are two laws discrete,  
Not reconciled.—  
Law of man, and law of thing;  
The last builds town and fleet,  
But it runs wild,  
And doth the man unking.

Let man serve law of man; . . .  
The state may follow as it can.

Emerson put it simply when, in 1842, he sought to explain himself and his associates by saying, "What is popularly called Transcendentalism among us, is Idealism; Idealism as it appears in 1842." Though he sought all his life long to regularize his ideas and to make the several parts of his philosophy cohere, he never added significantly to this first definition. Others commonly referred to New England Transcendentalism as the New Views or the Newness, and let it go at that. Lowell, himself a votary during his earlier years, called it "simply a struggle for fresh air, in which, if the windows could not be opened, there was danger that panes would be broken, though painted with images of Saints and martyrs."

Lowell here hints at an important aspect of the Transcendental movement; for aside from its ideological and religious aspects, it had its practical or (shall we say?) iconoclastic sides. It often opposed the existing order of things and endeavored to reform men and the institutions of men in conformity with its idealistic and humanitarian programs. High thought, Emerson held, was worthless unless translated into action. Accordingly Transcendentalists

organized themselves into clubs, associations, or communities like the Brook Farm Association for Agriculture and Education, and they founded journals of propaganda like the *Dial* and the *Harbinger* to propagate their views. They adopted and practiced a philosophy of "plain living and high thinking" in degrees that sometimes ran to what the man in the street considered idiosyncratic or eccentric. Emerson himself was too much devoted to his doctrine of individualism to participate actively in Brook Farm, which he characterized as "a perpetual picnic, a French Revolution in small, an Age of Reason in a patty-pan." He did not join whole-heartedly in the organized movement for reform; nevertheless he attended the Chardon Street Convention in Boston during 1840. Though he did not speak, he sat on the platform, and studied the faces before him. Hither had come disciples of many kinds, representative of all the forms of religious, philosophical, and social unrest of the time—some of them of the wildest type. Among them, his practiced eye recognized "Madmen, madwomen, men with beards, Dunkers, Muggletonians, Come-outers, Groaners, Agrarians, Seventh-day Baptists, Quakers, Abolitionists, Calvinists, Unitarians, and Philosophers." All came successively to the top to seize their moment, or their hour, wherein to chide or pray or preach or protest. Surely, contemplated Emerson, these were wild and "transcendental" times!

Lowell, too, commenting on the eccentric or comic side of the reform movement associated with Transcendentalism, observed:

Every possible form of intellectual and physical dyspepsia brought forth its gospel. Bran had its prophets, and the presartorial simplicity of Adam its martyrs. . . . Plainness of speech was carried to a pitch that would have taken away the breath of George Fox; and even swearing had its evangelists, who answered a simple inquiry after their health with an elaborate ingenuity of imprecation that might have been honorably mentioned by Marlborough in general orders. Everybody had a mission (with a capital M) to attend to everybody else's business. No brain but had its private maggot, which must have found pitifully short commons sometimes. Not a few impecunious zealots abjured the use of money (unless earned by other people), professing to live on the internal revenues of the spirit. Some had an assurance of instant millennium so soon as hooks and eyes should be substituted for buttons. Communities were established where everything was to be common but common sense. Men renounced their old gods, and hesitated only whether to bestow their furloughed allegiance on Thor or Budh. Conventions were held for every hitherto inconceivable purpose. The belated gift of tongues, as among the Fifth Monarchy men, spread like contagion, rendering its victims incomprehensible to all Christian

men. . . . Many foreign revolutionists out of work added to the general misunderstanding their contribution of broken English in every most ingenious form of fracture. All stood ready at a moment's notice to reform everything but themselves. The general motto was:—

“And we'll *talk* with them, too.  
And take upon 's the mystery of things  
As if we were God's spies.”

These represent some of the ways by which the general quickening of the romantic spirit during the first half of the nineteenth century expressed itself. While this flowering was especially luxuriant in New England (notably among the groups of writing men and women in the vicinity of Boston, Cambridge, and Concord), other sections of the country also felt its effects. Philadelphia, where so many of the stirring events of the Revolution had been enacted, had been among the first to dispute with Boston the literary and intellectual leadership, but after we have named the essentially eighteenth-century figures of Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Paine, Pierre S. Du Pont and Benjamin Rush, Francis Hopkinson, Charles Brockden Brown, and Joseph Dennie, the list of nineteenth-century men grows markedly meager. Meanwhile New York had gathered a notable literary colony, called the Knickerbocker group, including the Irving brothers, Paulding, Brevoort, Verplanck, the Duyckincks, and Cooper. Bryant, editor of the *New York Evening Post* from 1830 to 1876, and Horace Greeley, the reforming editor of the *New York Tribune* from 1841 to 1872, were no less influential, but not strictly speaking members of the group. In the South, there was Charleston, South Carolina, with William Gilmore Simms, Paul Hamilton Hayne, and Henry Timrod taking the leadership; while Virginia boasted men like John Pendleton Kennedy, William Alexander Caruthers, John Esten Cooke, and Edgar Allan Poe. Nor was romanticism in America a peculiarly Anglo-American manifestation. The French of Louisiana developed between 1830 and 1860 an *esprit* of racial and cultural solidarity that expressed itself in the remarkable body of literature with which the names of Gayarré, Testut, Cononge, Dugué, Roquette, and Mme. la Houssaye, among others, are linked. Another considerable literature was produced among the numerous though widely scattered German groups. Much of it dealt with the common themes of immigration, settlement, repatriation, and acculturation, but they also developed their own forms of romanticism, including nostalgia for the old country as well as romantic glorifications of the new home, accounts of their

wanderings forth, which already lay sufficiently in the past to be idealized or embroidered, or romantic tales of adventures on the frontier. Occasionally they produced a professional man of letters like Charles Sealsfield (Carl Postl), who wrote a series of notable American ethnographic novels which seem at once to reflect the literary method and saga-like manner of a Cooper and to foreshadow the scope of a Rolvaag, who belongs to a much later wave of European immigration.

But it was chiefly in New England, among the coteries of Concord and Cambridge, that we see the romantic spirit at its best and fullest development. In his study and on his quiet walks about Concord, Emerson pondered the idealistic thoughts which he incorporated in his lectures, essays, and poems. Nearby was Henry David Thoreau, who could be counted on to test Emerson's theories by putting them into practice. Intent on living life as daintily as one would pluck a flower, but even more bent on living so that it would not be said of him, when he came to die, that he had spent all his time merely preparing to live, Thoreau seemed to make an art of living, even while people stood a little in fear or awe of him. A long stone's throw away was Amos Bronson Alcott, the Orphic Sage, who expounded neo-Platonic mysticism and experimented with educational theories, communal living, and vegetarian diets. Close by, in his little study at the Old Manse, brooded Nathaniel Hawthorne while he plumbed the psychological and moral depths of man in his tales and romances. The mystic Jones Very and the eccentric William Ellery Channing the Younger were in Concord much of the time, and Margaret Fuller, apostrophized by Emerson as the greatest woman of ancient and modern times, though a storm center wherever she appeared, was a frequent visitor. Not many miles away, at Brook Farm, were the Ripleys and two or three score of other spiritually minded individuals bent on working out, on a cooperative basis, a satisfactory combination of spiritual effort and physical labor. George Ripley's fourteen volumes of *Specimens of Foreign Standard Literature* (translations chiefly from German transcendental literature and French eclectic philosophy) provoked a spirited controversy during the forties over the latest form of infidelity currently being proclaimed in such addresses as Emerson's before the Divinity School in Cambridge. The flames were fanned to new heat when Theodore Parker, proceeding on the basis of conclusions derived from German biblical critics, sought to say "a higher word" on the controversy in a pamphlet, in which he tried to segregate the transient from the

permanent elements of Christianity. During the years while Poe gravitated between Baltimore and Richmond, Philadelphia and New York, while Melville in New York pondered the tragedy of the human mind and made a Promethean assault on the inscrutability of the universe in *Moby Dick* and *Pierre*, up to the time when Whitman first sounded his "barbaric yawp over the roofs of the world," the atmosphere in the vicinity of Boston was supercharged with ideas and theories that transformed reasonable men into enthusiasts. Perfectionism and idealism joined hands with humanitarianism to engender a reform movement that included women's rights, universal suffrage, temperance, prohibition, abolition, and many more.

The movement to abolish slavery profoundly stirred individuals like John Brown, William Lloyd Garrison, Harriet Beecher Stowe, and John Greenleaf Whittier from the first. Originally suspect, the movement gradually gained momentum and respect, as Daniel Webster learned to his cost on falling from the position of a New England deity who could do no wrong in 1830 to the inglorious position of "Icha-

bod" in 1850 because he had dared to compromise over the issue of slavery. The abolition agitation provoked the young Lowell, a scion of one of the old, staid families, to go crusading for human rights, redressing wrongs, and overthrowing tyrannies of all kinds. It drove the gentle Alcott into a fine frenzy and the recluse Thoreau to attempt a one-man revolution against the United States government for conducting an unjust war with Mexico in order to extend the boundaries of slavery; and it succeeded in drawing even the Jovian Emerson sufficiently away from his individualistic and humanistic way of life to speak publicly in behalf of John Brown while the latter was under sentence of death as a "new saint awaiting his martyrdom, who, if he shall suffer, will make the gallows glorious like the cross."

Thus the renaissance of the forties and fifties ran full blast into the catastrophic war years, during which the prewar idealisms were tried by fire, and out of which emerged a chastened consciousness, a revaluation of human aspirations, and a reorientation of national destiny that led by slow degrees to the critically realistic temperament of modern America.



## COTTON MATHER (1663-1728)

Although Cotton Mather is today considered a greater man than his father Increase, during his lifetime fate played him a shabby trick by arranging affairs in such a way as to make him stand always a little in the shadow of his illustrious father, whom he outlived by only five years. Increase Mather served as pastor of old North Church in Boston from 1664 to his death, his son having to content himself with the position of teacher, so that on numerous occasions great opportunities passed him by to go to his senior, in a manner seriously to restrict the scope of Cotton's genius if not of his productivity. His father's forced retirement from the presidency of Harvard College in 1701 was a serious blow to Increase, but it was catastrophic for his son, who, at thirty-eight, had still a long life-expectancy. Although he yearned for the post, the trustees of Harvard thrice passed him up to elect men who he had every reason to believe were not his equals in intellectual attainments or pious orthodoxy. By 1723, when Increase Mather went to his well-earned reward, the opportunities which Cotton might have seized triumphantly if they had presented themselves earlier came too late. A generation that wanted none of the father wanted less of his son, and it fell to the unhappy lot of Cotton to preside at the fall of the Mather dynasty which Richard had established and Increase had sought to maintain. Even in death the hand of Increase remained on the son. When, about 1723, the offer of the rectorship of Yale came to Cotton, he felt bound to put aside this tempting offer to go over to the rival of his Alma Mater, which had treated him so shabbily. He chose to remain with his father during his last years, to minister to his beloved congregation in Boston, and to preside in the pulpit which had been for so many years the stronghold of the Mathers.

Destined by birth and motivated by ambition to perpetuate and glorify the orthodoxy of his father and his grandfathers (Richard Mather and John Cotton), Cotton Mather developed the precocity that sent him to Harvard College in 1675 when he was barely twelve, and that enabled him to take his first degree in due course. At eighteen he held a second degree and preached his first sermon; but being

afflicted by a grievous habit of stammering, resolved to give up the ministry for medicine, when a friend suggested that his trouble could be remedied if he would remember always to speak "with a dilated deliberation." He tried it and was cured. At the age of twenty he was ordained, and two years later was formally installed as the associate of his father in the most influential pulpit in America at the time. Here, in ceaseless prosecution of almost incredible labors—ministerial, literary, civic, philanthropic, oratorical, political, scientific, and social—he continued to the end of his sixty-five years of life.

Intensely emotional, introspective, serious-minded, and ascetic, his long "scholar's day" was packed with pastoral duties, study, domestic cares, fasts, and prayers, besides many midnight vigils devoted to soul-searching analyses of his heart and mind, during which he lay on his study floor alternately writhing in agonies over his "vileness" or reveling in spiritual ecstasy in moments of exaltation. Enormously read in many languages, encyclopedically learned, proud, pedantic, fantastic, he labored ceaselessly, preaching thousands of sermons, engaging in time- and energy-consuming public and political affairs, keeping some four hundred fasts, and publishing four hundred and forty-four books and pamphlets, besides leaving a number of extensive works in manuscript at his death. "In a single year," says Moses Coit Tyler, "besides doing all his work as master of a great metropolitan parish, and besides keeping sixty fasts and vigils, he published fourteen books." Small wonder that he wrote over his study door, as a reminder to himself and a warning to his visitors, "Be Short." He kept before him constantly the admonition that the work required by the Lord was great, and that the time to do it was brief. On his deathbed he gave this final charge to his son Samuel, "Remember only this one word—*Fructuosus*." It was the hereditary motto of the Mathers, descriptive of their passion for mighty labor and achievement.

Proud of his birth and heritage and addicted to vanity and an excessive consciousness of his high calling, he was ambitious to achieve sainthood; he was also often intemperate in denouncing his enemies



and all too eager for controversy with those who opposed him. Impulsive, nervously sensitive, and lacking in a sense of proportion in matters that touched his family or his personal pride, he was often dogmatic, dictatorial, overbearing, and querulous.

The record of his prodigiously fruitful life is all the more remarkable because it was made under very trying circumstances. Besides suffering much from poor health, perhaps partly self-induced by his overwrought, introspective, and acutely ascetic nature, he suffered much unhappiness in his private and domestic life. Burdened all his life by financial worries, he buried two of his wives early; his third wife became insane and caused insufferable domestic difficulties; a scapegrace son added special torments; nine of his children died in childhood; and when, in 1728, he himself gave up the ghost, only two of his fifteen children survived him. Yet through it all, he carried on to provide for his time and place the leadership to which he felt his high office called him, ministering to the spiritual wants of his people, endeavoring to educate and guide them in every detail, reproving them for their shortcomings or inspiring them to a greater service of God, and devoting much time and energy to organizing societies and public services among them.

With his father he was chiefly responsible for the overthrow of the hated Governor Andros, the restoration of a charter that had been revoked in 1684, and the appointment of Sir William Phips—revealing accounts of which affairs he subsequently incorporated in his laudatory *Life of Phips* (1692), also included in the *Magnalia Christi Americana* (1702), and in the appreciative life of his father which he published under the title of *Parentator* in 1724. About 1690 the Mathers were riding the crest of the waves of influence and power; but their successes were short-lived. The modified charter which Increase Mather secured did not win general approval in New England, and some of the policies and acts of Governor Phips backfired. The Mathers were blamed, and they suffered a decline in popularity. About the same time the Salem witchcraft troubles came to a head, and again they did not go unscathed. In this matter the mind of the Mathers found a congenial area, accepting with alacrity the challenge to delve into the world of spirits, in which they, along with the rest of the world, had implicit faith. Both took an active part in the trials, and Cotton especially sought to make fundamental inquiries into the problem by taking into his own home one of the bewitched children in order to study the manifestations of witchcraft at first hand. With his father, he distrusted the validity

of accepting "spectral evidence," but allowed his scruples to be overborne. What is more, his interest was less in securing convictions in court than in discovering curative measures, chiefly through prayer and fasting; and when it became evident that witchcraft was getting out of hand, Cotton Mather, more than anybody else concerned in the affair, was responsible for stopping the Salem delusions of 1692. But having participated in the trials, and being congenitally incapable of graciously admitting himself in error or inconsistent, he maneuvered himself into a position of defending the methods and judgments of the magistrates. The acrimonious pamphlet warfare that he carried on with Robert Calef did nothing but harm his cause, himself, and his father; and together they were singled out as chiefly responsible for the miscarriage of justice in Salem, while Samuel Sewall, another of the hanging judges, having the good grace to stand up in public meeting and to acknowledge his mistake, went unscathed. Cotton Mather, self-righteous and orthodox, and convinced that as one of the elect of God he could not have done wrong, never yielded an iota.

A few years later the Overseers of Harvard, responsive to the liberal rationalism to which the College had gone over, invoked an old law by which the president was required to live in Cambridge. Increase Mather, whose church and home were in Boston, was declared ineligible and forced to resign. When the trustees went on to appoint Samuel Willard, another nonresident, thus pointedly blinking the law which had served to rid them of the Mathers, it became clear to them how the wind was blowing. In the western part of the Bay Colony, Solomon Stoddard of Northampton inaugurated policies abhorrent to them; while in Boston itself Elisha Cooke, the one-time associate of Increase Mather in making representations against Andros to King William, turned against them to become the leader of the political opposition. Another blow that was especially hard to bear was the establishment of the Brattle Street Church in Boston under Benjamin Colman in 1699, and the institution in that church of liberal beliefs and practices against which the Mathers had held the line all along. While their power and influence were thus severely curtailed, they remained prominent figures, fighting a courageous though losing battle, but still attaining occasional triumphs, as in their successful scheming to secure the appointment of Joseph Dudley as governor. But once Dudley was in office, he repudiated them and their policies, thus forcing them into new schemes and intrigues to effect his removal.

Shorn of much of his hold on the public by the failure of his father to maintain his political dominance, Cotton turned his abundant energies and versatility more and more into purely intellectual pursuits and to the preparation of his more substantial books. Following his *Memorable Providences, Relating to Witchcraft and Possessions* (1689) and *The Wonders of the Invisible World* (1693), both reflecting the issues that culminated in the sad affair at Salem, he wrote the *Magnalia Christi Americana: Or, the Ecclesiastical History of New England* (1702), a compendium of history, theology, science, politics, diplomacy, and every other subject vitally affecting seventeenth-century America. His *Angel of Bethesda* is a medical manual, and *The Christian Philosopher* (1721) is a summary of the scientific knowledge of the day, in which the facts of science are used to support religion. As an attempt to reconcile religion and science and as an anticipation of the Emersonian dictum that "the religion that is afraid of science dishonors God and commits suicide," it demonstrates the catholicity of Mather's interests and disproves the traditional concept of him as a man whose mind was closed to all innovation. A presentation of the world as well planned, ordered, and beautiful, an enforcement of the idea that to study nature is to realize God's benevolence, and an argument for the idea that man can appreciate his Maker by the exercise of his observation and reason, this book presents ideas well advanced over those espoused by him earlier in his career, and furnished proof that, far from representing a Puritan type of mind that had become "ossified," Cotton Mather was capable of entertaining new ideas and developing intellectually even in his old age.

His *Psalterium Americanum* (1718) is an experiment in translating the Psalms while adapting them to metrical rendition. *Bonifacius: An Essay upon the Good that is to be Devised and Designed* (1710), better known as *Essays to Do Good*, remains one of the classics in that type of ethical writings. Another of his works distinguished for "practical piety" is the *Manductio ad Ministerium. Directions for a Candidate of the Ministry* (1726), a very comprehensive manual or guidebook for young men preparing for the service of the Lord, offering sound advice on social and aesthetic as well as on spiritual and professional matters. It is written "heartily, with real enthusiasm for the subject and with greater directness and simplicity of style" than his other works exhibit. Among the biographies of the 114 men and 20 women that he wrote, *The Life of Phips*, while one of the most entertaining, illustrates some of his great-

est faults as a biographer. It poses, as Professor Kenneth Murdock has observed, the interesting and insoluble question "of how far the book was written to exalt himself and his father and to defend their political tenets, and how far it was designed as a tribute to Sir William Phips." All in all, his *Parentator: Memoirs of Remarkables in the Life and Death of Increase Mather* (1724) is his most satisfactory biography. Despite its obviously favorable picture of his father, it stands in no bad light when compared with English works of the same type produced during the same period.

Besides these books, he kept an elaborate *Diary* (published in volumes VII-VIII of the *Massachusetts Historical Society Collections* for 1911-2), wrote numerous reports of his scientific observations for the Royal Society of London, penned his skillful *Political Fables*, and recorded his extensive biblical learning in the six ponderous folio volumes, entitled *Biblia Americana*, that are still preserved in manuscript by the Massachusetts Historical Society, besides numerous lesser works left in manuscript at his death.

In the *Manductio*, *The Christian Philosopher*, and the *Political Fables*, Mather illustrates the fact that he could write simply and directly, without the pedantry, show of erudition, circumlocution, and allusiveness of the "fantastic school" that overload the style of his biographical and historical writings with the surplusage of a "book-suffocated" mind.

Despite its faults of style and its numerous instances of special pleading, the *Magnalia Christi Americana* remains his most important book and provides his chief claim to a position of prominence as a writer. Ambitious in scope and purpose, its two bulky volumes are divided into seven books: (1) a history of the settlement of New England; (2) "the lives of the governors and magistrates of New England that have been shields unto the churches of New England"; (3) "the lives of sixty famous divines by whose ministry the churches of New England have been planted and continued"; (4) the history of Harvard College and of "some eminent persons educated therein"; (5) "the faith and order of the churches"; (6) "many illustrious discoveries and demonstrations of the Divine Providences in remarkable mercies and judgments"; and (7) "a book of the wars of the Lord," including "the afflictive disturbances which the churches of New England have suffered from their various adversaries," such as the Devil, Separatists, Familists, Antinomians, Arminians, Arians, Socinians, Quakers, clerical impostors, and Indians.

However circumscribed Mather's political and theological influence became during his later years, he continued active in founding organizations for social betterment, including proposals for the education of Negroes and missions to the far corners of the earth. His correspondence in the interest of these public-spirited measures was voluminous, and the names of his foreign correspondents read like a roster of all the learned men of the world, regardless of nationality, language, or distance. He braved unintelligent popular opinion that regarded diseases like the smallpox as a visitation from God, not to be interfered with by scientific or any other earthly measures, by introducing inoculation in Boston, despite threats of personal violence and a bomb hurled through his bedroom window with this note attached: "Cotton Mather, you Dog; Dam you: I'll inoculate you with this, with a Pox to you." In recognition of his learning and scientific attainments, he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society in 1713, to join the exceedingly small number of Americans similarly honored.

Bookish, but no mere bookworm, instructive and pious but also an engaging conversationalist, Cotton

Mather was more than an ordinary man. A vast reader, he contrived somehow or other to lay his hands on virtually all the significant books of the world. His manner of riding posthaste through an author, penciling as he went along, and reducing the whole substance of a book to two or three sentences, which he transcribed into his book of "Common Places" of "Quotidiana," whence they could be revived at his leisure, was something to behold. It was what enabled the Reverend Joshua Gee, in his sermon on the Death of Cotton Mather, to pay tribute to "the capacity of his mind, the readiness of his wit, the vastness of his reading, the strength of his memory . . . the tenor of his most entertaining and profitable conversation." Few men of his generation, or of later generations, could, with equal justice, say of themselves what he said of himself: "I am able with little study to write in seven languages. I feast myself with the sweets of all sciences which the more polite part of mankind ordinarily pretend to. I am entertained with all kinds of histories, ancient and modern. I am no stranger to the curiosities which, by all sorts of learning, are brought to the curious. These intellectual pleasures are far beyond any sensual ones."

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## SELECTIONS FROM THE

*Diary of Cotton Mather*<sup>1</sup>

1681. August 9. This Day, I took my second Degree, proceeding *Master of Arts*.

My Father was *President*, so that from his Hand I received my Degree.

Tis when I am gott almost half, a year, beyond *Eighteen*, in my Age.

And all the Circumstances of my Commencement, were ordered by a very sensibly kind Providence of God.

My Thesis was, *Puncta Hebraica sunt Originis Divinae*.<sup>2</sup>

December 28. This Day, our Church renewed their *Vote* for the Continuance of my public Labours among them; adding that it should bee in order to my Settlement among them as their *Pastor*.

And afterwards, voted mee a *Salary* of 70 lb. *Annunum*.

1683. May 14. I am extremely defective in recording particular Providences, that appear in the conduct of my Life. But indeed I am so shallow, that I cannot easily avoid the Fault of being, either *negligent* on one side, or *superstitious* on other.

However, I will now mention one little Thing of the same kind, that I have seen many in the Course of my Life; and it may bee, t'will do some Friend or other some good, that I should mention it.

<sup>1</sup> First published in 1911-12, as edited by W. C. Ford, in the Massachusetts Historical Society *Collections*, seventh series, vols. VII-VIII. Although many portions of the diary are lost, it affords a remarkably detailed account of Mather's intensely religious life, his far-flung pastoral and charitable ministrations, his literary and scholarly labors, his public as well as his most intimate private affairs, and the theological and political embroilments in which he and his father found themselves involved for the years 1681-1725.

<sup>2</sup> "Hebrew Vowels are of Divine Origin."

I was owner of a Watch, whereof I was very fond, for the Varietie of Motions in it. My Father was desirous of this Watch, and I, in a manner, gave it him, with such Thoughts, I owe him a great deal more than this; and the Observation of the fifth Commandment, never wants a *Recompense*. Quickly after this, there came to mee a Gentlewoman, from whom I had no Reason to expect so much as a Visit, but in her Visit, shee to my surprise, pray'd mee to accept, as a present from her, a Watch; which, was indeed preferable unto that which I had before parted with. I resolved hereupon, to stirr up, *Dutifulness unto Parents*, in my Neighbours, more than ever; and *redeem* the Time, which I was helped thus to *Measure*.

1684. February 9. . . . It has been a frequent Thing with mee, to redeem the *silent*, and otherwise, *thoughtless*, Minutes of my Time, in shaping Thousands of *ejaculatory Prayers* for my Neighbours. And by reciting a Few of them, the Way of my shaping the Rest, may bee conjectured. . . .

Casting my Eye upon,  
The Gentlewoman that  
carved for us.

A Gentlewoman lately  
married.

Ejaculations.  
Lord, carve, of thy Graces  
and Comforts, a rich por-  
tion, unto that Person.

Lord, espouse and marry,  
the Soul of that Person to  
thyself, in a Covenant never  
to be forgotten.

In passing along the *Street*, I have sett myself to *bless* thousands of persons, who never knew that I did it; with *secret Wishes*, after this manner sent  
30 unto Heaven for them.

Upon the Sight of	Ejaculations.
A tall Man.	Lord, give that Man, <i>High Attainments</i> in Christianity: lett him fear God, <i>above many</i> .
A lame Man.	Lord, help that Man, to walk <i>uprightly</i> .
A Negro.	Lord, wash that poor Soul white in the Blood of thy Son.
A Man carrying a Burden.	Lord, help this Man, to carry a <i>burdened Soul</i> , unto his Lord-Redeemer.

1685. May 4. Because my *Ordination* is to be performed the next Week, and because a *Parliament* is this very Day to sitt in *England*, I now plied myself unto the Exercises of a secret FAST before the Lord.

The Lord having assured mee, that all *Controversie* between Him and my Soul, was done away, I solemnly thus renewed and subjected His Covenant and gave up myself unto Him.

May 13 THIS DAY is appointed (*Because Thou, O Lord, art stronger than I, and hast prevailed!*) for my ORDINATION, to the Office of a Pastor over the North Church in Boston.

. . . With a Soul, inexpressibly irradiated from on High, I went into one of the vastest Congregations that has ever been seen in these parts of the World; where I prayed about an Hour and a Quarter, and preached (on Joh. 21. 17.) about an Hour and a three quarters; With such Assistences from Heaven, as exceeded all that my *poor Faith* could have imagined.

In the Afternoon, my Father having prayed and preached (on Act. 13. 2.), the *Ordination* was performed, with a more than ordinary Solemnitie, producing a greater Number of moved Hearts and weeping Eyes, than perhaps have been at any Time here seen together.

My Father, with Mr. Allen and Mr. Willard, the other two Ministers in the Town, imposed *Hands* on mee. My Father gave mee my charge: (which I have transcribed at the Beginning of my Bible): And good old Mr. Eliot gave mee, the right *Hand of Fellowship*.

1686. . . . in the month of March . . . there befell mee, an unexpected Thing, which was the occasion of my being shown unto *Israel*. A poor condemned Malefactor<sup>3</sup> . . . did . . . beg of mee, to

<sup>3</sup> James Morgan, a condemned murderer.

preach a suitable Sermon for him . . . So, in our Congregation at *Boston*, I preached . . . to a vast Concourse of People, with a great Assistance of Heaven, on Isa. 45. 22. . . . Now, it pleased God, that the people, throughout the Country, very greedily desired the Publication of my poor Sermon; and so . . . my mean Sermon came abroad. . . .

The Book sold exceedingly; and I, hope did a World of Good. It is entitled, THE CALL OF THE GOSPEL.

There has been since, a second Edition of the Book, with a Copy of my Discourse with the poor Malefactor walking to his Execution added at the End.

1692. In the Spring of this Year, I preached, on the Lecture, to the Country, a Sermon upon *Temptations*; and now, behold, my poor Country entred quickly into *Temptation*.

The rest of the Summer, was a very doleful Time, unto the whole Country.

The *Divels*, after a most præternatural Manner, by the dreadful Judgment of Heaven took a *bodily Possession*, of many people, in *Salem*, and the adjacent places; and the Houses of the poor People, began to be filled with the horrid Cries of Persons tormented by *evil Spirits*. There seem'd an execrable *Witchcraft*, in the Foundation of this wonderful Affliction, and many Persons, of diverse Characters, were accused, apprehended, prosecuted, upon the *Visions* of the Afflicted.

For my own part, I was alwayes afraid of proceeding to convict and condemn any Person, as a *Confederate* with afflicting Daemons, upon so feeble an Evidence, as a *spectral Representation*. Accordingly, I ever testified against it, both publicly and *privately*; and in my *Letters* to the *Judges*, I particularly, besought them, that they would by no means admitt it; and when a considerable *Assembly of Ministers* gave in their *Advice* about that Matter, I not only concurred with their Advice, but it was I who drew it up.

Nevertheless, on the other side, I saw in most of the *Judges*, a most charming Instance of *Prudence* and *Patience*, and I knew their exemplary *Pietie*, and the Agony of Soul with which they sought the Direction of Heaven; above most other People, whom I generally saw enchanted into a raging, railing, scandalous and unreasonablen Disposition, as the Distress increased upon us: For this Cause tho' I could not

allow the *Principles*, that some of the Judges had espoused, yett I could not but speak honourably of their *Persons*, on all Occasions; and my *Compassion*, upon the Sight of their *Difficulties*, raised by my many Journeyes to *Salem*, the chief Seat of these diabolical Vexations, caused mee yett more to do so. And meerly, as far as I can learn, for this Reason, the mad people thro' the Countrey, under a fascination on their *Spirits*, aequal to what our *Energumens*<sup>4</sup> had on their *Bodies*, reviled mee, as if I had been the Doer of all the hard Things, that were done, in the Prosecution of the *Witchcraft*.

In this *Evil-Time*, I offered, at the beginning, that if the *possessed* People, might bee scattered far asunder, I would singly provide for six of them; and wee would see whether without more bitter methods, *Prayer* with *Fasting* would not putt an End unto these heavy Trials: But my offer (which none of my Revilers, would have been so couragous or so charitable, as to have made) was not accepted.

However, for a great part of the Summer, I did every *Week*, (mostly) spend a Day by myself, in the Exercises of a sacred *FAST*,<sup>5</sup> before the Lord. On these Dayes (whereof I have kept no Record) I cried unto the Lord, not only for my own Preservation, from the Malice and Power of the *evil Angels*, but also, for the *good Issue* of the Calamities wherein Hee had permitted the *evil Angels* to ensnare this miserable Countrey.

1696. *December 20. Lords-Day*. This Day, there being a violent *Storm* arisen, I laid aside the Discourse, which I had prepared for my Congregation and with plentiful Assistences from the Lord Jesus Christ. I discoursed on the Lord Jesus Christ as a *Refuge from the Storms of the Wrath of God*. (My Text was Isa. 25. 4.)

Before the Sermon, as I was praying in the great Congregation, it was very strongly imprinted on my Mind, that I must pray for some of our *sea-faring* Friends, who might at this Instant, bee in Distress, upon our *Coast*. I did so with much *Particularitie* and with a *Particular Faith* for mercy to bee vouchsafed unto some such distressed Neighbours.

<sup>4</sup> People possessed by evil spirits.

<sup>5</sup> From this date onward Mather kept secret fasts and midnight vigils without number, usually dedicating every Friday to these exercises, which approached fanatical proportions in their alternate moments of self-debasement and spiritual ecstasy—often minutely recorded in his diary. From 1692, also, date the increasing difficulties which the Mathers encountered in maintaining their power and that of the Church in New England.

Now, within a few Minutes, after the Prayer was ended, the Congregation heard several great Guns fired, by a vessel in the Bay, wanting *Help*; and Heaven sent that *Help* unto the poor People aboard, that the vessel thro' extreme Dangers, gott safely in.

1697. *January 15*. Being afflicted last Night, with discouraging Thoughts as if unavoidable *Marks*, of the *Divine Displeasure* must overtake my *Family*, for my not appearing with *Vigor* enough to stop the proceedings of the Judges, when the Inextricable Storm from the *Invisible World* assaulted the Countrey, I did this morning, in prayer with my Family, putt my Family into the Merciful Hands of the Lord. And, with Tears, I received Assurance of the Lord, that Marks of His Indignation should not follow my Family, but that having the *Righteousness* of the Lord Jesus Christ pleading for us, *Goodness* and *Mercy* should follow us, and the signal *Salvation* of the Lord.

*January 23*. I attempted, this Day, the Exercises of a secret *FAST* before the Lord. But so extremely cold was the weather, that in a warm Room, on a great Fire, the Juices forced out at the End of short Billets of Wood, by the Heat of the Flame, on which they were laid, yett froze into Ice, at their coming out. This Extremity of the Cold caused mee to desist from the purpose, which I was upon; because I saw it impossible to serve the Lord, without such Distraction, as was inconvenient.

*November 7. Lords-Day*. I took my little daughter, Katy, into my Study; and there I told my Child, that I am to *dy* shortly, and shee must, when I am *Dead*, Remember every Thing, that I said unto her.

I sett before her, the sinful and woful Condition of her *Nature*, and I charg'd her, to *pray in secret Places*, every Day, without ceasing, that God for the Sake of Jesus Christ would give her a *New Heart*, and *pardon* Her Sins, and make her a *Servant* of His.

I gave her to understand, that when I am taken from her, shee must look to meet with more humbling *Afflictions* than shee does, now shee has a careful and a tender *Father* to provide for her; but, if shee would *pray* constantly, God in the Lord Jesus Christ, would bee a *Father* to her, and make all *Afflictions* work together for her Good.

I signified unto her, That the People of God, would much observe how shee carried herself, and that I had written a Book, about, *Ungodly Children*, in the Conclusion whereof I say, that this Book will

bee a terrible Witness against my own Children, if any of them should not bee *Godly*.

At length, with many Tears, both on my Part, and hers, I told my Child, that God had from Heaven assured mee, and the good Angels of God had satisfied mee, *that shee shall bee brought Home unto the Lord Jesus Christ, and bee one of His forever*. I bid her use this, as an Encouragement unto her Supplications unto the Lord, for His Grace. But I therewithal told her, that if shee did not now, in her Childhood seek the Lord, and give herself up unto Him, some dreadful Afflictions must befall her, that so her Father's Faith, may come at its Accomplishments.

I thereupon made the Child kneel down by mee; and I poured out my Cries unto the Lord, that Hee would lay his Hands upon her, and bless her and save her, and make her a *Temple* of His Glory. It will be so; It will be so!

I write this, the more particularly, that the Child may hereafter have the Benefit of reading it.<sup>6</sup>

1698. November 17. Now I feel that there is a *God*, and there is a *Christ*, and there is a *Holy Spirit*, and there are glorious *Angels*, and I am a *Servant* of the Lord, and a *Fellow-Servant* with His *Angels*!

The Execution of the miserable Malefactor, was ordered for to have been the last Week, upon the Lecture of another. I wondered then what would become of my *Particular Faith*, of her condition being so ordered in the Providence of God, that it should furnish mee, with a *special Opportunity* to glorify Him. While I was entirely resigning to the wisdom of Heaven, all such Matters, the *Judges*, wholly without my seeking, altered and allow'd her Execution to fall on the Day of my *Lecture*. The *General Court* then sitting, ordered the Lecture to be held in a larger and stronger House, than that *old one*, where tis usually kept. For my own part, I was weak, and faint, and spent; but I humbly gave myself up to the *Spirit* of my Heavenly Lord and Hee assured mee, that Hee would send His *good Angel* to strengthen mee. The greatest Assembly, ever in this Countrey preach'd unto, was now come together; It may bee four or five thousand Souls. I could not gett unto the *Pulpit*, but by climbing over *Pues* and *Heads*: and there the Spirit of my dearest Lord came upon mee. I preached with a more than ordinary Assistance, and enlarged, and uttered the most awak-

<sup>6</sup> The child was in her ninth year at the time.

ening Things, for near two Hours together. My Strength and Voice failed not; but when it was near failing, a silent Look to Heaven strangely renew'd it. In the whole I found Prayer answered, and Hope extended, and Faith encouraged, and the Lord using mee, the vilest of all that great Assembly, to glorify Him.

Oh! what shall I render to the Lord!

The Sermon, I gave to the Bookseller; and annexed thereunto, an History of *Criminals* executed in this Land, and effectually, an Account of their dying Speeches, and of my own Discourses with them in their last Hours; hoping to warn others against Vice, by an History thus accomodated unto the Purpose. I entitled the Book, *PILLARS OF SALT*.

1699. April 2. A good woman in our Neighbourhood, has languished miserably for diverse Years, and suffered many things of many Physicians, and is nothing bettered, but rather grows worse. Her Husband, apprehending her, not far from Death, prevailed with some Christians, to keep this as a Day of *Prayer* with *Fasting* for her. I spent part of the Forenoon with them; and as I was drawing towards the Close of my *prayer*, I thought with myself, the *Word* should go with *Prayer*. When the Prayer was ended, I called for a Bible, intending to look out some agreeable Scripture, for the present Occasion. And behold, the very first Place, which in the opened Bible, I look'd upon, was that in Mar. 5. 25. *A certain Woman had suffered many Things of many Physicians, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse; when shee heard of Jesus, shee came, and touched His Garment: and shee felt in her Body, that shee was healed*. I wondred at the Pertinency of the Place, and preached a Sermon upon it.

The woman, to the surprize of us all, recovered so that shee came abroad into the Congregation, to give Thanks, for the wondrous Works of God.

1700. January 5. I see *Satan* beginning a terrible Shake unto the Churches of *New England*; and the *Innovators*, that have sett up a *new Church in Boston*,<sup>7</sup> (a new one indeed!) have made a *Day of Temptation* among us. The Men are ignorant, arrogant, obstinate, and full of Malice and Slander, and they fill the Land with *Lyes*, in the Misrepresentation whereof, I am a very singular Sufferer.

<sup>7</sup> A reference to the establishment of the Brattle Street Church under Benjamin Colman in 1699—a signal to Mather of the rise to a position of formidable opposition to the old creed of the established churches by the newer forms of rationalistic criticism.



Wherefore I sett apart this Day again, for Prayer in my Study: to cry mightily unto God. . . .

December 28. The Lord has permitted Satan to Raise an extraordinary Storm upon my Father, and myself. All the Rage of Satan, against the Holy Churches of the Lord, falls upon us. First *Calf's* Book, and then *Coleman's*,<sup>8</sup> do sett the People in a mighty Ferment. All the Adversaries of the Churches lay their Heads together, as if by Blasting of us, they hoped utterly to blow up all.

1702. November 14. The awful Circumstances upon me, (and upon the Town,) caused me to ly in the Dust this Day with secret Prayer and Fasting before the Lord.

In this Month, my lovely Consort again declines; and some latent Mischief within her, brings on a Feebleness, that gives us great Apprehensions of a mortal Issue.

Nov. 21. I obtained, I compelled, the Liesure, for another Day of Prayer with Fasting in my Study; 20 to carry my distressed Family unto the Lord.

<sup>8</sup> As if the books of Robert Calef and Benjamin Colman attacking the Mathers as chiefly responsible for the witchcraft delusions were not enough, the Mathers were embittered by the determination of the Harvard Overseers to unseat Increase Mather as President of Harvard College and incensed by the bold affronts offered to them by the Brattle Street Church. For Cotton Mather the troubles were especially aggravated during 1700-02 by losses and crosses at home, including the death of his wife, after a long illness, on December 1, 1702. (See the account of her death below under the date of December, 1702.) Two months later a "well accomplished Gentlewoman," for whom Cotton Mather confessed "a mighty Tenderness," proposed marriage to him and pursued him in a manner to set tongues clacking furiously, until on March 6, 1703, he recorded in his diary, "The Design of Satan, to entangle me in a Match that might have proved ruinous to my Family, or my Ministry, is defeated, by my Resolution totally to reject the Address of the young Gentlewoman to me; which I do, for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ, whose Name, I see will suffer, if I accept her; and I do it cheerfully, tho' she be so very charming a Person." On March 15, he wrote: "I struck my Knife, into the Heart of my Sacrifice, by a Letter to her Mother." On April 27, he added, "I have the Inconvenience of being a Person, whom the Eye and the Talk of the People is very much upon. My present Circumstances give them Opportunities to invent and report Abundance of disadvantageous Falsehoods, of my being engaged in such and such Courtships, wherein I am really unconcerned. But the Addresses which I have had from the young Gentlewoman so often mentioned in these Papers, and the Discourses thereby, raised among the dissatisfied People, afford the greatest Theme for their mischievous and malicious Lying to turn upon. When all Assaults upon me from that Quarter, have been hitherto unsuccessful, at last, I am unhappily persecuted with Insinuations, that I had proceeded so far in Countenancing the matter, I could not with Honour and Justice now steer clear of it, as I have done." By July 10, however, we read, "God showes me a Gentlewoman within two Houses of my own . . . of Piety and Probity, and a most unspotted Reputation. . . . Her name is Mrs. ELIZABETH HUBBARD." Four days later, he called upon her, and on August 18, they were married by his father. Thus ended one of the most trying periods of Mather's emotional life.

Humiliacons are coming thick upon me!

My Study, is tho' a large, yett a warm chamber, (the hangings whereof, are Boxes with between two and three thousand Books in them;) and we are so circumstanced, that my House, tho' none of the smallest, cannot afford a safe Hospital now for my sick Folks, any where so well as there. So I resigned my Study, for an Hospital to my little Folks, that are falling sick with a loathsome Disease. God sanctified 10 this, to humble me, for my not serving Him as I should have done in my Study; which provokes Him to chase me out of it.

First, my godly Maid, was carried into it; where she lay horribly full of the Small-pox, distracted, and hardly escaping with her Life.

Nov. 24. My Daughter Nanny was taken Sick. She proved full and blind, and very sore of the Dis-temper.

Nov. 27. My son Increase, was taken sick.

He also proved pretty full and blind, and sore; tho' not so bad as his Sister.

The little Creatures keep calling for me so often to pray with them, that I can scarce do it less than ten or a dozen times in a day; besides what I do with my Neighbours.

But the most exquisite of my Trials, was the Condition of my lovely Consort. It now began to be hopeless. . . .

How shall I glorify the Lord, in the Midst of these 30 Distresses and Confusions? Truly, after my sorry Manner, I did sett myself to do it.

I spent much Time with my lovely Consort. I pray'd with her as agreeable as I could. I endeavoured her most consummate Præparation for the heavenly World, by suitable Questions and Proposals. I comforted her, with as lively Discourses upon the Glory of Heaven, whereto she was going as I could make unto her. I disposed her, and myself, all that I could, unto a glorious Resignation.

40 At last, the black Day arrives: Tuesday, the first of December. I had never yett seen such a black Day in all the Time of my Pilgrimage. The Desire of my Eyes is this Day to be taken from me. Her Death is lingring, and painful. All the Forenoon of this Day, she lives in the Pangs of Death; sensible, until the last Minute or two before her final Expiration.

I cannot Remember the Discourses that passed between us. Only, her devout Soul was full of Satisfaction, about her going to a State of Blessedness with



the Lord Jesus Christ, and as far as my Distress would permit me, I studied how to confirm her Satisfaction and Consolation.

This I remember, that a little before she died, I asked her to tell me faithfully, what Fault she had seen in my Conversation, that she would advise me to rectify. She replied (which I wondred at,) that she knew of none, but that God had made what she had observed in my Conversation exceeding serviceable unto her, to bring her much nearer unto Himself.

When I saw to what a Point of Resignation, I was now called of the Lord, I resolved, with His Help therein to glorify Him. So, two hours before my lovely Consort expired, I kneeled by her Bed-Side, and I took into my two Hands, a dear Hand, the dearest in the World. With her then in my Hands, I solemnly and sincerely gave her up unto the Lord; and in token of my real RESIGNATION, I gently putt her out of my Hands, and laid away a most lovely Hand, resolving that I would never touch it any more!

This was the hardest and perhaps the bravest Action, that ever I did. She afterwards told me, *that she sign'd and seal'd my Act of Resignation*. And tho' before that, she call'd me, continually; she after this never asked for me any more.

She continued until near two a clock, in the Afternoon. And the last sensible Word, that she spoke, was to her weeping Father, *Heaven, Heaven will make amends for all*.

1711. May 9. The Colledge at Connecticut,<sup>9</sup> languishes for Want of a President. I have a Gentleman in my Eye, who, I hope, would prove a Blessing to them. And by my Letters to the Government there, I endeavour to recomend him unto such a Station.

December 2. By the gracious Providence of God, it is come to pass, that the religious, ingenious, and sweet-spirited Isaac Watts hath sent me the new Edition of his *Hymns*. . . . I will sing them, and endeavour to bring my Family in Love with them. I would also procure our Booksellers to send for a Number of them; and perswade my well-disposed Neighbours to furnish themselves with them; and in this way promote Picty among them.

December 16. I have gott by me, a pretty large Summ of Money, to be dispersed among the poor. I

<sup>9</sup> Yale, founded 1701, and designed as a safeguard of orthodoxy after Harvard was considered lost to the opposition.

will first cry to the glorious Lord for His Direction I will then look out for Objects of Poetry, both at home and abroad. And I will annex Books of Piety, to accompany the Parcels in the Dispensing of them.

1713. August 3. Perhaps, by sending some agreeable Things, to the Author<sup>10</sup> of *The Spectator*, and, *The Guardian*, there may be brought forward some Services to the best Interests in the Nation.

October 12. This Day, in Ships arriving from London, I receive Letters from the Secretary of the Royal Society, who tells me, that my *Curiosa Americana* being readd before that Society, they were greatly satisfied therewithal, and ordered the Thanks of the Society to be returned unto me; they also signified theyr Desire and Purpose, to admitt me as a Member of their Body. And, he assures me, that at their first lawful Meeting for such Purposes, I shall be made, A FELLOW OF THE ROYAL SOCIETY; Whereof he Expects then to send me the Advice, and some other Entertainments.<sup>11</sup>

1721. May 26. The grievous Calamity of the *Small-Pox* has now entered the Town. The Practice of conveying and suffering the *Small-pox* by *Inoculation*, has never been used in *America*, nor indeed in our Nation. But how many Lives might be saved by it, if it were practised? I will procure a Consult of our Physicians, and lay the matter before them.

June 22. I prepare a little Treatise on the *Small-Pox*; first awakening the Sentiments of *Piety*, which it calls for; and then exhibiting the best medicines and Methods, which the world has yett had for the managing of it; and finally, adding the new Discovery, to prevent it in the way of *Inoculation*. It is possible, that this Essay may save the *Lives*, ycs, and the *Souls* of many People. Shall I give it unto the Booksellers? I am waiting for Direction.

August 1. Full of Distress about *Sammy*; He begs to have his Life saved, by receiving the *Small-Pox*, in the way of *Inoculation*, whereof our Neighbourhood has had no less than ten remarkable Experiments; and if he should after all dy by receiving it in the common Way, how can I answer it? On the other Side, our People, who have Satan remarkably filling their Hearts and their Tongues, will go on

<sup>10</sup> One wonders whether Mather ever submitted any of his writings to Addison.

<sup>11</sup> His actual election to this Society—one of the most highly prized honors ever to come to Cotton Mather—was delayed by some oversight until April 11, 1723, but to all intents and purposes he was a member from 1713 on and was so regarded by the members.

with infinite Prejudices against me and my Ministry, if I suffer this operation upon the Child; and be sure, if he should happen to miscarry under it, my Condition would be insupportable.

His Grandfather advises that I keep the whole Proceeding private, and that I bring the Lad into this Method of Safety.

My god, I know not what to do, but my Eyes are unto Thee!

Aug. 15. My dear Sammy, is now under the Operation and receiving the *Small-Pox* in the way of *Transplantation*. The Success of the Experiment among my Neighbours, as well as abroad in the World, and the urgent Calls of his Grandfather for it, have made me think, that I could not answer it unto God, if I neglected it. At this critical Time, how much is all Piety to be press'd upon the Child!

September 5. Sammy recovering Strength, I must now earnestly putt him on considering, what he shall render to the Lord! . . .

Nibby still dangerously circumstanced.

And Nancy still a dying.

September 6. Nancy still a dying.

September 8. To our surprise, this Day, dear Nancy revives . . .

November 14. What an Occasion, what an Incentive, to have PIETY, more than ever quicken'd and shining in my Family, have I this morning been entertained withall!

My Kinsman, the Minister of Roxbury, being Entertained at my House, that he might there undergo

the *Small-Pox Inoculated*, and so Return to the Service of his Flock, which have the Contagion begun among them;

Towards three a Clock in the Night, as it grew towards Morning of this Day, some unknown Hands, threw a fired Granado into the Chamber where my Kinsman lay, and which uses to be my Lodging-Room. The Weight of the Iron Ball alone, had it fallen upon his Head, would have been enough to have done Part of the Business designed. But the Granado was charged, the upper part with dried Powder, the lower Part with a Mixture of Oil of Turpentine and Powder and what else I know not, in such a Manner, that upon its going off, it must have splitt, and have probably killed the Persons in the Room, and certainly fired the Chamber, and speedily laid the House in Ashes. But, *this Night there stood by me the Angel of the GOD, whose I am and whom I serve*; and the merciful Providence of god my SAVIOUR, so ordered it, that the Granado passing thro' the Window, had by the Iron in the Middle of the Casement, such a Turn given to it, that in falling on the Floor, the fired Wild-fire in the Fuse was violently shaken out upon the Floor, without firing the Granado. When the Granado was taken up, there was found a Paper so tied with String about the Fuse, that it might out-Live the breaking of the Shell, which had these words in it; COTTON MATHER, *You Dog, Dam you: I'l inoculate you with this, with a Pox to you.*

1681-1721

1911-1912

## Magnalia Christi Americana<sup>12</sup>

### A General Introduction

Ἐγὼ δὲ τοῦτο, τῆς τῶν ἐντεῦ ξαμένων ὠφελείας ἕνεκα.  
*Dicam hoc propter utilitatem eorum qui Lecturi sunt hoc opus.* THEODORIT.<sup>13</sup>

§1. I WRITE the Wonders of the CHRISTIAN RELIGION, flying from the Depravations of *Europe*, to the *American Strand*: And, assisted by the Holy Author of that *Religion*, I do, with all Conscience of *Truth*,

<sup>12</sup> The decision to write the *Magnalia* was formed in July, 1693, when Mather wrote in his *Diary*, "And because I foresaw an inexpressible deal of service like to be thereby done for the Church of God, not only here but abroad in Europe, I formed a design to endeavor *The Church History of this Country*. Laying my design before the neighboring ministers, they encouraged it; and accordingly I set myself to cry mightily unto the Lord that if my undertaking herein might be for His glory, He would grant me assistance in it." Begun later in the same

required therein by Him, who is the *Truth* it self, Report the *Wonderful Displays* of His Infinite Power, Wisdom, Goodness, and Faithfulness, wherewith His Divine Providence hath *Irradiated* an *Indian Wilderness*.

I Relate the *Considerable Matters*, that produced and attended the First Settlement of *COLONIES*, which have been Renowned for the Degree of REF-

year, the two-volume history was virtually completed in 1697. It was published, after numerous vexatious delays, in London, in 1702. The text here given follows the first edition.

<sup>13</sup> Both Mather's Latin translation and the original Greek of Theodorit (one of the early Church fathers c. 393-457) mean, "I say this for the benefit of those who are going to read this book."

Generally, notes are supplied only for authors or individuals not readily to be identified by the student.

ORMATION, Professed and Attained by *Evangelical Churches*, erected in those *Ends of the Earth*: And a *Field* being thus prepared, I proceed unto a Relation of the *Considerable Matters* which have been acted thereupon.

I first introduce the *Actors*, that have, in a more exemplary manner served those *Colonies*; and give *Remarkable Occurrences*, in the exemplary *LIVES* of many *Magistrates*, and of more *Ministers*, who so *Lived*, as to leave unto Posterity, *Examples* worthy of 10 *Everlasting Remembrance*.

I add hrcunto, the *Notables* of the only *Protestant University*, that ever shone in that Hemisphere of the *New World*; with particular Instances of *Criolians*,<sup>14</sup> in our *Biography*, provoking the *whole World*, with vertuous Objects of Emulation.

I introduce then, the *Actions* of a more Eminent Importance, that have signalized those *Colonies*; Whether the *Establishments*, directed by their *Synods*; with a Rich Variety of *Synodical* and *Eccle-* 20 *siastical* Determinations; or, the *Disturbances*, with which they have been from all sorts of *Temptations* and *Enemies* Tempestuated; and the *Methods* by which they have still weathered out each *Horrible Tempest*.

And into the midst of these *Actions*, I interpose an entire *Book*, wherein there is, with all possible Veracity, a *Collection* made, of *Memorable Occurrences*, and amazing *Judgments* and *Mercies*, befalling many *particular Persons* among the People of 30 *New-England*.

Let my Readers expect all that I have promised them, in this *Bill of Fare*; and it may be they will find themselves entertained with yet many other Passages, above and beyond their Expectation, deserving likewise a room in *History*: In all which, there will be nothing, but the *Author's* too mean way of preparing so great Entertainments, to Reproach the Invitation.

(Parts 2, 3, and 4, here omitted, recount the failure of the Puritans to effect a continued reformation of the Church of England and their reasons for coming to America, followed by an elaborate discourse on the virtues of history and an enumeration of the most illustrious historians, ancient and modern, sacred and profane.)

§5. Reader! I have done the part of an *Impartial* 40 *Historian*, albeit not without all occasion perhaps, for

<sup>14</sup> An obsolete word for persons born or naturalized in America, but of European race; similar to the modern word "Creole."

the Rule which a worthy Writer, in his *Historica*, gives to every Reader, *Historici Legantur cum Moderatione & venia, & cogitetur fieri non posse ut in omnibus circumstantiis sint Lyncei*.<sup>15</sup> Polybius<sup>16</sup> complains of those *Historians*, who always made either the *Carthaginians* brave, and the *Romans* base, or *è contra*, in all their actions, as their Affection for their own *Party* led them. I have endeavoured, with all good *Conscience*, to decline this writing meerly for a *Party*, or doing like the Dealer in *History*, whom *Lucian*<sup>17</sup> derides, for always calling the Captain of his own *Party* an *Achilles*, but of the adverse *Party* a *Thersites*: Nor have I added unto the just Provocations for the Complaint made by the Baron *Maurier*,<sup>18</sup> That the *greatest part* of *Histories* are but so many *Panegyricks* composed by *Interested Hands*, which *elevate Iniquity to the Heavens*, like *Paterculus*,<sup>19</sup> and like *Machiavel*,<sup>20</sup> who propose *Tiberius Cesar*, and *Cesar Borgia*, as *Examples* fit for *Imitation*, whereas *True History* would have Exhibited them as *Horrid Monsters*—as very *Devils*. 'Tis true, I am not of the Opinion, that one cannot merit the Name of an *Impartial Historian*, except he write bare *Matters of Fact*, without all *Reflection*; for I can tell where to find this given as the Definition of *History*, *Historia est rerum gestarum, cum laude aut vituperatione, Narratio*:<sup>21</sup> And if I am not altogether a *Tacitus*,<sup>22</sup> when *Vertues* or *Vices* occur to be matters of *Reflection*, as well as of *Relation*, I will, for my Vindication, appeal to *Tacitus* himself, whom *Lipsius*<sup>23</sup> calls one of the *Prudentest* (tho' *Tertullian*<sup>24</sup> long before, counts him the *Lyingest*) of them who have *Inriched* the *World* with *History*: He says, *Praecipuum munus Annalium reor, ne virtutes sileantur, utque pravis Dictis, Factisque ex posteritate & Infamia metus sit*.<sup>25</sup> I have not

<sup>15</sup> Historians should be read with moderation and indulgence, and it must be remembered that they cannot always be as keensighted as Lynceus."

<sup>16</sup> Polybius (205?-123 B.C.), Greek historian.

<sup>17</sup> Lucian (120?-200?), Greek satirical author.

<sup>18</sup> Probably Louis Aubrey, Seigneur du Maury (d. 1687), author of several historical works.

<sup>19</sup> Gaius Vellius Paterculus (c. 19 B.C.-A.D. 31), Roman historian.

<sup>20</sup> Niccolò di Bernardo Machiavelli (1469-1527), Florentine statesman and author of *The Prince*.

<sup>21</sup> "History is the story of events, with praise or blame."

<sup>22</sup> Publius Cornelius Tacitus (55?-117?), Roman historian.

<sup>23</sup> Joest Lips or Lipsius (1547-1606), historian and classical scholar.

<sup>24</sup> Tertullian (160?-230), Latin church father.

<sup>25</sup> "I consider it the primary function of history not to let virtues be uncelebrated, and to inspire a fear of that infamy which bad words and deeds will have in the eyes of posterity."

Commended any Person, but when I have really judg'd, not only *That* he *Deserved* it, but also that it would be a Benefit unto Posterity to know, Wherein he deserved it: And my Judgment of *Desert* hath not been *Biassed*, by Persons being in my own particular Judgment of *Disputation*, among the Churches of God. I have been as willing to wear the Name of *Simplicius Verinus*,<sup>26</sup> throughout my whole undertaking, as he that, before me, hath assumed it: Nor am I like Pope *Zachary*, impatient so much as to hear of any *Antipodes*.<sup>27</sup> The Spirit of *Schlusbergius*,<sup>28</sup> who falls foul with Fury and Reproach on all who differ from him; The Spirit of an *Heylin*,<sup>29</sup> who seems to count no Obloquy too hard for a Reformer; and the Spirit of those (*Folio-writers* there are, some of them, in the English Nation!) whom a Noble Historian Stigmatizes, as, *Those Hot-headed, Passionate Bigots, from whom, 'tis enough, if you be of a Religion contrary unto theirs, to be defamed, condemned and pursued with a thousand Calumnies*.<sup>30</sup> I thank Heaven I Hate it with all my Heart. But how can the *Lives* of the *Commendable* be written without *Commending* them? Or, is that Law of History given in one of the eminentest pieces of *Antiquity* we now have in our hands, wholly antiquated, *Maxime proprium est Historiae, Laudem rerum egregie gestarum persequi*?<sup>30</sup> Nor have I, on the other side, forbore to mention many *Censurable* things, even in the Best of my Friends, when the things, in my opinion, were *not Good*; or so bore away for *Placentia*, in the course of our Story, as to pass by *Verona*; <sup>31</sup> but been mindful of the Direction which Polybius gives to the Historian, *It becomes him that writes an History, sometimes to extol Enemies in his Praises, when their praise-worthy Actions bespeak it, and at the same time to reprove the best Friends, when their Deeds appear worthy of reproof; in-as much as History is good for nothing, if Truth*

(which is the very Eye of the Animal) be not in it. Indeed I have thought it my duty upon all accounts, (and if it have proceeded unto the degree of a *Fault*, there is, it may be, something in my *Temper* and *Nature* that has betray'd me therein) to be more sparing and easie, in thus mentioning of *Censurable* things, than in my *other Liberty*: A writer of *Church-History*, should, I know, be like the *builder of the Temple*, one of the *Tribe of Naphthali*; and for this I will also plead my *Polybius* in my Excuse; *It is not the Work of an Historian, to commemorate the Vices and Villanies of Men, so much as their just, their fair, their honest Actions: And the Readers of History get more good by the Objects of their Emulation, than of their Indignation*. Nor do I deny, that tho' I cannot approve the Conduct of *Josephus*,<sup>32</sup> (whom *Jerom* <sup>33</sup> not unjustly nor ineptly calls, *The Greek Livy* <sup>34</sup>) when he left out his *Antiquities*, the Story of the *Golden Calf*, and I don't wonder to find *Chamier*,<sup>35</sup> and *Rivet*,<sup>36</sup> and others, taxing him for his *Partiality* towards his Country-men; yet I have left unmentioned some *Censurable Occurrences* in the Story of our Colonies, as things no less *Unuseful* than *Improper* to be raised out of the Grave, wherein *Oblivion* hath now buried them; lest I should have incurred the *Pasquil* <sup>37</sup> bestowed upon Pope *Urban*, who employing a *Committee* to Rip up the *Old Errors* of his Predecessors, one clap'd a pair of Spurs on the heels of the Statue of *St. Peter*; and a Label from the Statue of *St. Paul* opposite therunto, upon the Bridge, ask'd him, *Whither he was bound*? *St. Peter* answered, *I apprehend some Danger in staying here; I fear they'll call me in Question for denying my Master*. And *St. Paul* replied, *Nay then I had best be gone too, for they'll question me also, for Persecuting the Christians before my Conversion*. Briefly, My Pen shall Reproach none, that can give a Good Word unto any Good Man that is not of their own *Faction*, and shall *Fall out* with none, but those that can *Agree* with no body else, except those of their own *Schism*. If I draw any sort of Men with *Charcoal*, it shall be, because I remember a notable passage of the *Best Queen* that ever was in the World,

<sup>26</sup> Name assumed by Claude Saumaise (Salmasius), 1588–1653, French classical scholar.

<sup>27</sup> A reference to Pope Zacharias, bishop of Rome from 741 to 752, who expelled Virgilius of Salzburg from the Church for maintaining that there was another world below the earth.

<sup>28</sup> Konrad Schlüsselburg (1543–1649), Lutheran theological writer.

<sup>29</sup> Peter Heylin (1600–1662), Anglican divine, defender of Bishop Laud and critic of the Puritans.

<sup>30</sup> "It is of the highest propriety for history to praise fine deeds."

<sup>31</sup> This passage appears to refer to Hasdrubal's delay in striking into the heart of Italy because he stopped to besiege Placentia.

<sup>32</sup> Flavius Josephus (37?–97?), Jewish historian.

<sup>33</sup> Saint Jerome or Hieronymous (340?–420), Latin father of the Church.

<sup>34</sup> Titus Livius (59 B.C.–A.D. 17), Roman historian.

<sup>35</sup> Daniel Chamier (1570?–1621), French Protestant writer.

<sup>36</sup> André Rivet (1573–1651), French Calvinist theologian.

<sup>37</sup> Lampoon or attack.

our late *Queen Mary*:<sup>38</sup> Monsieur *Jurieu*,<sup>39</sup> that he might Justifie the Reformation in *Scotland*, made a very black Representation of our old *Queen Mary*; for which, a certain *Sycophant* would have incensed our *Queen Mary* against that Reverend Person, saying, *Is it not a Shame that this Man, without any Consideration for your Royal Person, should dare to throw such Infamous Calumnies upon a Queen, from whom your Royal Highness is descended?* But that Excellent Princess replied, *No, not at all; Is it not enough that by fulsome Praises great Persons be lull'd asleep all their Lives; But must Flattery accompany them to their very Graves? How should they fear the Judgment of Posterity, if Historians be not allowed to speak the Truth after their Death?* But whether I do my self Commend, or whether I give my Reader an opportunity to Censure, I am careful above all things to do it with Truth; and as I have considered the words of *Plato*, *Deum indigne & graviter ferre, cum quis ei similem hoc est, virtute praestantem, vituperet, aut laudet contrarium*:<sup>40</sup> So I have had the Ninth Commandment of a greater Law-giver than *Plato*, to preserve my care of Truth from first to last. If any Mistake have been any where committed, it will be found meerly *Circumstantial*, and wholly *Involuntary*; and let it be remembered, that tho' no *Historian* ever merited better than the Incomparable *Thuanus*,<sup>41</sup> yet learned Men have said of his Work, what they never shall truly say of ours, that it contains *multa falsissima & indigna*.<sup>42</sup> I find<sup>30</sup> *Erasmus*<sup>43</sup> himself mistaking One Man for Two, when writing of the Ancients. And even our own English Writers too are often mistaken, and in Matters of a very late Importance, as *Baker*,<sup>44</sup> and *Heylin*,<sup>45</sup> and *Fuller*,<sup>46</sup> (professed Historians) tell us, that *Richard Sutton*, a single Man, founded the *Charter-House*; whereas his Name was *Thomas*, and he was a married Man. I think I can Recite such Mistakes, it may be, *Sans* Number occurring in the

most credible Writers; yet I hope I shall commit none such. But altho' I thus challenge, as my due, the Character of an *Impartial*, I doubt I may not challenge *That* of an *Elegant Historian*. I cannot say, whether the *Style*, wherein this *Church-History* is written, will please the Modern *Criticks*; But if I seem to have used ἀπλουστάτη συντάξει γραφῆς,<sup>47</sup> a Simple, Submiss, Humble *Style*, 'tis the same that *Eusebius*<sup>48</sup> affirms to have been used by *Hegesippus*,<sup>49</sup> who, as far as we understand, was the first Author (after *Luke*) that ever composed an entire Body of *Ecclesiastical History*, which he divided into *Five Books*, and Entitled ὑπομνήματα τῶν ἐκκλησιαστικῶν πράξεων.<sup>50</sup>

Whereas others, it may be, will reckon the *Style* Embellished with too much of *Ornament*, by the multiplied References to other and former Concerns, closely couch'd, for the Observation of the *Attentive*, in almost every Paragraph; but I must confess, that I am of his mind who said, *Sicuti sal modice cibis aspersus Condit, & gratiam saporis addit, ita si paulum Antiquitatis admiscueris, Oratio fit venustior*.<sup>51</sup> And I have seldom seen that Way of Writing faulted, but by those, who, for a certain odd Reason, sometimes find fault, *That the Grapes are not ripe*. These *Embellishments* (of which yet I only *Veniam pro laude peto*)<sup>52</sup> are not the peurile Spoils of *Polyanthes*'s;<sup>53</sup> but I should have asserted to be the choice *Flowers* as most that occur in Ancient and Modern Writings, almost unavoidably putting themselves into the Authors Hand, while about his Work, if those words of *Ambrose*<sup>54</sup> had not a little frightened me, as well as they did *Baronius*,<sup>55</sup> *Unumquemque Fallunt sua scripta*.<sup>56</sup> I observe that Learned Men have been terrified by the Reproaches of *Pedantry*, which littler Smatterers at Reading and Learning have, by their *Quoting Humours* brought upon themselves, that, for to avoid all Approaches towards that which those Feeble Creatures have gone to

<sup>38</sup> "Our late Queen Mary," wife of William III, died in 1694.

<sup>39</sup> Pierre Jurieu (1637-1713), French Protestant theologian and controversialist.

<sup>40</sup> "To God it is an unworthy and serious offense to abuse anyone who is like him in virtue, or to praise the opposite."

<sup>41</sup> Jacques Auguste de Thou (1553-1617), French historian and poet.

<sup>42</sup> "Much that is very false and unworthy."

<sup>43</sup> Desiderius Erasmus (1466?-1536), Dutch scholar.

<sup>44</sup> Sir Richard Baker (1568?-1645), an English chronicler.

<sup>45</sup> Peter Heylin (1600-1662), English clergyman and controversialist.

<sup>46</sup> Thomas Fuller (1608-1661), English preacher and historian.

<sup>47</sup> "The simplest style of writing."

<sup>48</sup> Pamphili Eusebius (260?-340?), ecclesiastical historian.

<sup>49</sup> Hegesippus, Athenian orator, a contemporary of Demosthenes.

<sup>50</sup> "Memorials of ecclesiastical transactions."

<sup>51</sup> "Just as salt discreetly spread over food seasons it and improves its flavor, so the mixture of some archaisms makes the style more charming."

<sup>52</sup> "I ask pardon for this praise."

<sup>53</sup> That is, a collection, or anthology, of choice quotations.

<sup>54</sup> Saint Ambrose (340?-397), Bishop of Milan.

<sup>55</sup> Baronius (1538-1607), Italian ecclesiastical scholar and historian.

<sup>56</sup> "Everyone misjudges his own writings."

imitate, the best way of Writing has been injuriously deserted. But what shall we say? The Best Way of Writing, under Heaven, shall be the Worst, when Erasmus his Monosyllable Tyrant<sup>57</sup> will have it so! And if I should have resign'd my self wholly to the Judgment of others, What way of Writing to have taken, the Story of the two Statues made by Policletus<sup>58</sup> tells me, what may have been the Issue: He contrived one of them according to the Rules that best pleased himself, and the other according to the Fancy of every one that look'd upon his Work: The former was afterwards Applauded by all, and the latter Derided by those very Persons who had given their Directions for it. As for such Unaccuracies as the Critical may discover, *Opere in longo*,<sup>59</sup> I appeal to the Courteous, for a favourable Construction of them; and certainly they will be favourably Judged of, when there is considered the Variety of my other Employments, which have kept me in continual Hurries, I had almost said, like those of the Ninth Sphere,<sup>60</sup> for the few Months in which this Work had been Digesting. It was a thing well thought, by the wise Designers of Chelsey-Colledge,<sup>61</sup> wherein able Historians were one sort of Persons to be maintained; That the Romanists do in one Point condemn the Protestants; for among the Romanists, they don't burden their Professors with any Parochial Incumbrances; but among the Protestants, the very same Individual Man must Preach, Catechize, Administer the Sacraments, Visit<sup>30</sup> the Afflicted, and manage all the parts of Church-Discipline; and if any Books for the Service of Religion, be written, Persons thus extremely incumbered must be the Writers, Now, of all the Churches under Heaven, there are none that expect so much Variety of Service from their Pastors, as those of New-England; and of all the Churches in New-England, there are none that require more than those of Boston, the Metropolis of the English America; whereof one is, by the Lord Jesus Christ, committed<sup>40</sup> unto the Care of the unworthy Hand, by which this History is compiled. Reader, Give me leave humbly to mention, with him in Tully, *Antequam de Re, Pauca de Me!*<sup>62</sup> Constant Sermons, usually more than once, and perhaps three or four times, in a Week, and all the other Duties of a Pastoral Watchfulness, a very large Flock has all this while demanded of me; wherein, if I had been furnished with as many Heads as a Typhoeus, as many Eyes as an Argos, and as many Hands as a Briareus, I might have had Work enough to have employ'd them all; nor hath my Station left me free from Obligations to spend very much time in the Evangelical Service of others also. It would have been a great Sin in me, to have Omitted, or Abated, my Just Cares, to fulfil my Ministry in these things, and in a manner Give my self wholly to them. All the time I have had for my Church-History, hath been perhaps only, or chiefly, that, which I might have taken else for less profitable Recreations; and it hath all been done by Snatches. My Reader will not find me the Person intended in his Littany, when he says, *Libera me ab homine unius Negotis*:<sup>63</sup> Nor have I spent Thirty Years in shaping this my History, as Diodorus Siculus<sup>64</sup> did for his, [and yet both Bodinus<sup>65</sup> and Sigonius<sup>66</sup> complain of the Σφαλματα<sup>67</sup> attending it.] But I wish I could have enjoy'd entirely for this Work, one quarter of the little more than Two Years which have roll'd away since I began it; whereas I have been forced sometimes wholly to throw by the Work whole Months together, and then resume it, but by a stolen hour or two in a day, not without some hazard of incurring the Title which Coryat<sup>68</sup> put upon his History of his Travels, *Crudities hastily gobbled up in five Months*. Protogenes<sup>69</sup> being seven Years in drawing a picture, Appeles<sup>70</sup> upon the sight of it, said, *The Grace of the Work was much allay'd by the length of the Time*. Whatever else there may have been to take off the Grace of the Work, now in the Readers hands, (whereof the Pictures of Great

<sup>57</sup> This appears to be a reference to William Lambarde's writing in *Perambulation of Kent* (1570). "Our speech at this day (for the most part) consisteth of words of one sillable. Which thing Erasmus observing, merily in his Ecclesiast, compareth the English toong to a Dogs barking, that soundeth nothing else, but Baw, waw, waw, in Monosillable."

<sup>58</sup> Polyclethus (fl. 430 B.C.), Greek sculptor.

<sup>59</sup> "In an extensive work."

<sup>60</sup> The ninth, so-called "Crystalline Sphere," or "Primum Mobile," of the Ptolemaic system, whose spinning kept the other eight spheres in rotation and created the "music of the spheres."

<sup>61</sup> King James's College, Chelsea, founded in 1609.

<sup>62</sup> "Before proceeding to the subject, a little about myself."

<sup>63</sup> "Deliver me from the man of only one interest."

<sup>64</sup> Diodorus Siculus, Roman historian contemporary with Caesar and Augustus.

<sup>65</sup> Bodinus (b. 1530), French historian.

<sup>66</sup> Charles Sigonius (1524-1585), Italian writer and philologist.

<sup>67</sup> "Errors."

<sup>68</sup> Thomas Coryat or Coryate (1577-1617), English traveler and author of *Coryate's Crudities*.

<sup>69</sup> Protogenes, Greek painter of the third century.

<sup>70</sup> Appeles, Greek painter, fl. c. 330 B.C.

and Good Men make a considerable part) I am sure there hath not been the *length of the Time* to do it. Our English Martyrologer,<sup>71</sup> counted it a sufficient *Apology*, for what Meanness might be found in the first Edition of his *Acts and Monuments*, that it was *hastily rashed up in about fourteen Months*: And I may Apologize for this Collection of our *Acts and Monuments*, that I should have been glad, in the little more than *Two Years* which have run out, since I enter'd upon it, if I could have had one half of *About fourteen Months* to have entirely devoted thereunto. But besides the *Time*, which the *Daily Services* of my own first, and then many other Churches, have necessarily call'd for, I have lost abundance of precious *Time*, thro' the feeble and broken State of my *Health*, which hath unfitted me for *Hard Study*; I can do nothing to purpose at *Lucubrations*. And yet, in this *Time* also of the two or three Years last past, I have not been excused from the further Diversion of *Publishing* 20 (tho' not so many as they say *Mercurius Trismegistus* did, yet) more than a *Score* of other Books, upon a copious Variety of other Subjects, besides the composing of several more, that are not yet published. . . .

[Mather proceeds, in the remaining portion of this section, to describe the huge compendium of Biblical learning, entitled *Biblia Americana*, which he has compiled. It has never been published. The six folio volumes of manuscript are today in the possession of the Massachusetts Historical Society. In the sixth section of the *Magnalia* he returns to the trials and tribulations of a writer in a frontier society, ending with the following passage equally revelatory of himself and his generation.] 30

§6. . . . However, All these things, and an hundred more such things which I think of, are very small Discouragements for such a Service as I have here endeavoured. I foresee a Recompence, which will abundantly swallow up all Discouragements! It may be *Strato* the Philosopher counted himself well recompensed for his Labours when *Ptolomy* bestow'd fourscore Talents on him. It may be *Archimelus* the 40 Poet counted himself well recompensed, when *Hiero* sent him a thousand Bushels of Wheat for one little Epigram: And *Saleius* the Poet might count himself well recompensed, when *Vespasian* sent him twelve thousand and five hundred *Philippicks*; and *Oppian* the Poet might count himself well recompensed, when *Caracalla* sent him a piece of Gold for every

<sup>71</sup> John Fox or Foxe (1516–1587), English church historian, author of *Acts and Monuments* . . . (1563).

Line which he had inscribed unto him. As I live in a Country where such Recompences never were in fashion; it hath no Preferments for me, and I shall count that I am well Rewarded in it, if I can escape without being heavily Reproached, Censured and Condemned, for what I have done: So I thank the Lord, I should exceedingly Scorn all such mean Considerations, I seek not out for Benefactors, to whom these Labours may be Dedicated: There is ONE to whom all is due! From Him I shall have a Recompence: And what Recompence? The Recompence, whereof I do, with inexpressible Joy, assure my self, is this, *That these my poor Labours will certainly serve the Churches and Interests of the Lord Jesus Christ*. . . .

Unto thee, therefore, O thou Son of God, and King of Heaven, and Lord of all things, whom all the Glorious Angels of Light, unspeakably love to Glorifie; I humbly offer up a poor History of Churches, which own thee alone for their Head, and Prince, and Law-giver; Churches which thou hast purchas'd with thy own Blood, and with wonderful Dispensations of thy Providence hitherto protected and preserved; and of a People which thou didst Form for thy self, to shew forth thy Praises. I bless thy great Name, for thy inclining of me to, and carrying of me through, the Work of this History: I pray thee to sprinkle the Book of this History with thy Blood, and make it acceptable and profitable unto thy Churches, and serve thy Truths and Ways among thy People, by that which thou hast here prepared; for 'tis THOU that hast prepar'd it for them. Amen.

*Quid sum? Nil. Quis sum? Nullus. Sed Gratia CHRISTI, Quod sum, quod Vivo, quodque Laboro, facit.*<sup>72</sup>

#### BOOK II, CHAPTER I

Galcacius Secundus.<sup>73</sup> *The Life of WILLIAM BRADFORD, Esq; Governour of PLYMOUTH Colony.*

*Omnium Somnos, illius vigilantia defendit, omnium otium illius Labor, omnium Delitias illius Industria, omnium vacationem illius occupatio.*<sup>74</sup>

<sup>72</sup> "What am I? Nothing. Who am I? No one. But the Grace of Christ makes me what I am, my life, and what I do."

<sup>73</sup> "The second helmet wearer,"—second, in view of the fact that John Carver had served as governor during the first year of the colony. Upon his death, Bradford was elected.

<sup>74</sup> "His watchfulness secures the sleep of all; his toil, the rest of all; his industry, the pleasures of all; and his diligence, the leisure of all."



§2.<sup>75</sup> Among those Devout People was our *William Bradford*, who was Born Anno 1588 in an obscure Village call'd *Ansterfield*,<sup>76</sup> where the People were as unacquainted with the Bible, as the Jews do seem to have been with *part* of it in the Days of *Josiah*; a most Ignorant and Licentious People, and like unto their Priest. Here, and in some other Places, he had a Comfortable Inheritance left him of his Honest Parents, who died while he was yet a Child, and cast him on the Education, first of his Grand Parents, and then of his Uncles, who devoted him, like his Ancestors, unto the Affairs of Husbandry. Soon a long Sickness kept him, as he would afterwards thankfully say, from the Vanities of Youth, and made him the fitter for what he was afterwards to undergo. When he was about a Dozen Years Old, the Reading of the Scriptures began to cause great Impressions upon him; and those Impressions were much assisted and improved, when he came to enjoy Mr. *Richard Clifton's* Illuminating Ministry, not far 20 from his Abode; he was then also further befriended, by being brought into the Company and Fellowship of such as were then called Professors; though the Young Man that brought him into it, did after become a Prophane and Wicked Apostate. Nor could the Wrath of his Uncles, nor the Scoff of his Neighbours now turn'd upon him, as one of the Puritans, divert him from his Pious Inclinations.

§3. At last beholding how fearfully the Evangelical and Apostolical Church-Form, whereinto the 30 Churches of the Primitive Times were cast by the good Spirit of God, had been Deformed by the Apostacy of the Succeeding Times; and what little Progress the Reformation had yet made in many Parts of Christendom towards its Recovery, he set himself by Reading, by Discourse, by Prayer, to learn whether it was not his Duty to withdraw from the Communion of the Parish-Assemblies, and engage with some Society of the Faithful, that should keep close unto the Written Word of God, as the Rule 40 of their Worship. And after many Distresses of Mind concerning it, he took up a very Deliberate and Understanding Resolution of doing so; which Resolution he cheerfully Prosecuted, although the provoked Rage of his Friends tried all the ways imaginable to

reclaim him from it, unto all whom his Answer was, *Were I like to endanger my Life, or consume my Estate by any ungodly Courses, your Counsels to me were very seasonable: But you know that I have been Diligent and Provident in my Calling, and not only desirous to augment what I have, but also to enjoy it in your Company; to part from which will be as great a Cross as can befall me. Nevertheless, to keep a good Conscience, and walk in such a Way as God has prescribed in his Word, is a thing which I must prefer before you all, and above Life it self. Wherefore, since 'tis for a good Cause that I am like to suffer the Disasters which you lay before me, you have no Cause to be either angry with me, or sorry for me; yea, I am not only willing to part with every thing that is dear to me in this World for this Cause, but I am also thankful that God has given me an Heart so to do, and will accept me so to suffer for him. Some lamented him, some derided him, all dissuaded him: Nevertheless the more they did it, the more fixed he was in his Purpose to seek the Ordinances of the Gospel, where they should be dispensed with most of the Commanded Purity; and the sudden Deaths of the chief Relations which thus lay at him, quickly after convinced him what a Folly it had been to have quitted his Profession, in Expectation of any Satisfaction from them. So to Holland he attempted a removal.*

§4. Having with a great Company of Christians 50 Hired a Ship to Transport them to Holland, the Master perfidiously betrayed them into the Hands of those Persecutors, who Rifled and Ransack'd their Goods, and clapp'd their Persons into Prison in Boston,<sup>77</sup> where they lay for a Month together. But Mr. Bradford being a Young Man of about Eighteen, was dismissed sooner than the rest, so that within a while he had Opportunity with some others to get over to Zealand, through Perils both by Land and Sea not inconsiderable; where he was not long Ashore e're a Viper seized on his Hand, that is, an Officer, who carried him unto the Magistrates, unto whom an envious Passenger had accused him of having fled out of England. When the Magistrates understood the True Cause of his coming thither, they were well satisfied with him; and so he repaired joyfully unto his Brethren at Amsterdam, where the Difficulties to which he afterwards stooped in Learning and Serving of a Frenchman at the Working of

<sup>75</sup> The first paragraph relates briefly the experiences of the Pilgrims before they came to America.

<sup>76</sup> The first edition of the *Magnalia*, printed without benefit of the author's reading the proofs, contains many errors. Ansterfield is a misprint for Austerfield.

<sup>77</sup> Boston, England.



*Silks*, were abundantly Compensated by the *Delight* wherewith he sat under the *Shadow* of our Lord in his purely dispensed Ordinances. At the end of Two Years, he did, being of Age to do it, convert his Estate in *England* into Money; but Setting up for himself, he found some of his Designs by the *Providence* of God frowned upon, which he judged a *Correction* bestowed by God upon him for certain Decays of *Internal Piety*, wherunto he had fallen; the *Consumption* of his *Estate* he thought came to prevent a *Consumption* in his *Virtue*. But after he had resided in *Holland* about half a Score Years, he was one of those who bore a part in that Hazardous and Generous Enterprize of removing into *New-England*, with part of the *English Church* at *Leyden*, where at their first Landing, his dearest Consort accidentally falling Overboard, was drowned in the *Harbour*; and the rest of his Days were spent in the Services, and the Temptations, of that *American Wilderness*.

§5. Here was Mr. *Bradford* in the Year 1621. Unanimously chosen the *Governour* of the Plantation: The Difficulties whercof were such, that if he had not been a Person of more than Ordinary Piety, Wisdom and Courage, he must have sunk under them. He had with a Laudable Industry been laying up a Treasure of *Experiences*, and he had now occasion to use it: Indeed nothing but an *Experienced* Man could have been suitable to the Necessities of the People. The Potent Nations of the *Indians*, into whose Country they were come, would have cut them off, if the Blessing of God upon his Conduct had not quell'd them; and if his Prudence, Justice and Moderation had not overruled them, they had been ruined by their own *Distempers*. One *Specimen* of his Demeanour is to this Day particularly spoken of. A Company of Young Fellows that were newly arrived, were very unwilling to comply with the Governour's Order for *Working* abroad on the Publick Account; and therefore on *Christmass-Day*, when he had called upon them, they excused themselves, with a pretence that it was against their *Conscience* to *Work* such a Day. The Governour gave them no Answer, only that he would spare them till they were better informed; but by and by he found them all at *Play* in the Street, sporting themselves with various Diversions; whereupon Commanding the Instruments of their Games to be taken from them, he

effectually gave them to understand, *That it was against his Conscience that they should play whilst others were at Work; and that if they had any Devotion to the Day, they should show it at Home in the Exercises of Religion, and not in the Streets with Pastime and Frolics*; and this gentle Reproof put a final stop to all such Disorders for the future.

§6. For Two Years together after the beginning of the Colony, whereof he was now Governour, the poor People had a great Experiment of *Man's not living by Bread alone*; for when they were left all together without one Morsel of *Bread* for many Months one after another, still the good Providence of God relieved them, and supplied them, and this for the most part out of the *Sea*. In this low Condition of Affairs, there was no little Exercise for the *Prudence* and *Patience* of the Governour, who cheerfully bore his part in all; And that *Industry* might not flag, he quickly set himself to settle *Propriety*<sup>78</sup> among the *New-Planters*; forseeing that while the whole Country labour'd upon a *Common Stock*, the *Husbandry* and *Business* of the Plantation could not flourish, as *Plato* and others long since dream'd that it would, if a *Community* were established. Certainly, if the Spirit which dwelt in the *Old Puritans*, had not inspired these *New-Planters*, they had sunk under the Burden of these Difficulties; but our *Bradford* had a *double Portion* of that Spirit.

§7. The Plantation was quickly thrown into a *Storm* that almost overwhelmed it, by the unhappy Actions of a Minister sent over from *England* by the *Adventurers* concerned for the Plantation; but by the Blessing of Heaven on the Conduct of the Governour, they Weathered out that *Storm*. Only the *Adventurers* hereupon breaking to pieces, threw up all their Concernments with the *Infant Colony*; whereof they gave this as one Reason, *That the Planters dissembled with His Majesty, and their Friends in their Petition, wherein they declared for a Church-Discipline, agreeing with the French and others of the Reforming Churches in Europe*. Whereas 'twas now urged, that they had admitted into their Communion a Person, who at his Admission utterly renounced the Churches of *England*, (which Person by the way, was that very Man who had made the Complaints against them) and there-

<sup>78</sup> Property.

fore though they denied the *Name of Brownists*,<sup>79</sup> yet they were the *Thing*. In Answer hercunto, the very Words written by the Governour were these; *Whereas you Tax us with dissembling about the French Discipline, you do us wrong, for we both hold and practice the Discipline of the French and other Reformed Churches (as they have published the same in the Harmony of Confessions) according to our Means, in Effect and Substance. But whereas you would tie us up to the French Discipline in every Circumstance, you derogate from the Liberty we have in Christ Jesus. The Apostle Paul would have none to follow him in any thing, but wherein he follows Christ; much less ought any Christian or Church in the World to do it. The French may err, we may err, and other Churches may err, and doubtless do in many Circumstances. That Honour therefore belongs only to the Infallible Word of God, and pure Testament of Christ, to be propounded and followed as the only Rule and Pattern for Direction herein to all Churches and Christians. And it is too great Arrogancy for any Man or Church to think, that he or they have so sounded the Word of God unto the bottom, as precisely to set down the Churches Discipline without Error in Substance or Circumstance, that no other without blame may digress or differ in any thing from the same. And it is not difficult to shew that the Reformed Churches differ in many Circumstances among themselves.* By which Words it appears how far he was free from <sup>30</sup> that Rigid Spirit of Separation, which broke to pieces the Separatists themselves in the Low Countries, unto the great Scandal of the Reforming Churches. He was indeed a Person of a well-temper'd Spirit, or else it had been scarce possible for him to have kept the Affairs of Plymouth in so good a Temper for Thirty Seven Years together; in every one of which he was chosen their Governour, except the Three Years, wherein Mr. Winslow, and the Two Years, wherein Mr. Prince, at the choice of the People, <sup>40</sup> took a turn with him.

§8. The Leader of a People in a Wilderness had need be a Moses; and if a Moses had not led the People of Plymouth-Colony, when this Worthy Person was their Governour, the People had never with

<sup>79</sup> Followers of Robert Browne (1550?-1633), English divine, who first formulated the principles of Congregationalism. The term was often applied loosely to people who demanded separation of church and state, or to designate radicals or extremists.

so much Unanimity and Importunity still called him to lead them. Among many Instances thereof, let this one picce of *Self-denial* be told for a Memorial of him, wheresoever this History shall be considered. The Patent of the Colony was taken in his Name, running in these Terms, To William Bradford, his Heirs, Associates and Assigns: But when the number of the *Freemen* was much Increased, and many New Townships Erected, the General Court there desired of Mr. Bradford, that he would make a Surrender of the same into their Hands, which he willingly and presently assented unto, and confirmed it according to their Desire by his Hand and Seal, reserving no more for himself than was his Proportion, with others, by Agreement. But as he found the Providence of Heaven many ways Recompensing his many Acts of *Self-denial*, so he gave this Testimony to the Faithfulness of the Divine Promises; *That he had forsaken Friends, Houses and Lands for the sake of the Gospel, and the Lord gave them him again.* Here he prospered in his Estate; and besides a Worthy Son which he had by a former Wife, he had also Two Sons and a Daughter by another, whom he Married in this Land.

§9. He was a Person for Study as well as Action; and hence, notwithstanding the Difficulties through which he passed in his Youth, he attained unto a notable Skill in Languages; the Dutch Tongue was become almost as Vernacular to him as the English; the French Tongue he could also manage; the Latin and the Greek he had Mastered; but the Hebrew he most of all studied, *Because*, he said, *he would see with his own Eyes the Ancient Oracles of God in their Native Beauty.* He was also well skill'd in History, in Antiquity, and in Philosophy; and for Theology he became so versed in it, that he was an Irrefragable Disputant against the Errors, especially those of Anabaptism, which with Trouble he saw rising in his Colony; wherefore he wrote some Significant things for the Confutation of those Errors. But the Crown of all was his Holy, Prayerful, Watchful and fruitful Walk with God, wherein he was very Exemplary.

§10. At length he fell into an Indisposition of Body, which rendred him unhealthy for a whole Winter; and as the Spring advanced, his Health yet more declined; yet he felt himself not what he counted Sick, till one Day; in the Night after which,

the God of Heaven so fill'd his Mind with *Ineffable Consolations*, that he seemed little short of *Paul*, rapt up into the *Unutterable* Entertainments of *Paradise*. The next Morning he told his Friends, *That the good Spirit of God had given him a Pledge of his Happiness in another World, and the First-fruits of his Eternal Glory*: And on the Day following he died, May 9. 1657. in the 69th Year of his Age—lamented by all the Colonies of *New-England*, as a Common Blessing and Father to them all.

O mihi si Similis Contingat Clausula Vitæ!<sup>80</sup>

Plato's brief Description of a Governour, is all that I will now leave as his Character, in an

#### EPITAPH.

Νομῆς Τροφὸς ἀγέλης ἀνθρωπίνης.<sup>81</sup>

MEN are but FLOCKS: BRADFORD beheld their Need,  
And long did them at once both Rule and Feed.

[Following the life of Bradford, Mather goes on, in Chapter II of Book II, to relate the lives of the successors of Bradford as governor of Plymouth Colony; Chapter III lists the "Assistants," or "Senators," as Mather calls them. Chapter IV is devoted to the life of John Winthrop, first governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony.]

#### BOOK II, CHAPTER IV

Nehemias Americanus.<sup>82</sup> *The Life of JOHN WINTHROP, Esq; Governour of the MASSACHUSETT Colony.*

Quicunq; Venti erunt, Ars nostra certe non aberit.  
CICERO.<sup>83</sup>

§1. Let Greece boast of her patient *Lycurgus*, the Lawgiver, by whom *Diligence, Temperance, Fortitude* and *Wit* were made the *Fashions* of a therefore Long-lasting and Renowned Commonwealth: Let Rome tell of her Devout *Numa*, the Lawgiver, by whom the most famous Commonwealth saw *Peace* Triumphant over extinguished *War* and cruel *Plunders*; and *Murders* giving place to the more mollifying Exercises of his *Religion*. Our *New-England* shall tell and boast of her WINTHROP, a Lawgiver, as patient as *Lycurgus*, but not admitting any of his Criminal Disorders; as devout as *Numa*, but not liable to any of his Heathenish Madnesses; a Governour in whom the Excellencies of *Christianity* made a most improving Addition unto the *Virtues*, wherein even without those he would have made a *Parallel* for the Great

Men of Greece, or of Rome, which the Pen of a *Plutarch* has Eternized.

§2. A stock of *Heroes* by right should afford nothing but what is *Heroical*; and nothing but an extream Degeneracy would make any thing less to be expected from a Stock of *Winthrops*. Mr. *Adam Winthrop*, the Son of a Worthy Gentleman wearing the same Name, was himself a Worthy, a Discreet, and a Learned Gentleman, particularly Eminent for *Skill* in the *Law*, nor without Remark for *Love* to the *Gospel*, under the Reign of King *Henry VIII*; And Brother to a Memorable Favourer of the *Reformed Religion* in the Days of *Queen Mary*, into whose Hands the famous martyr *Philpot* committed his *Papers*, which afterwards made no Inconsiderable part of our *Martyr-Books*. This Mr. *Adam Winthrop* had a Son of the same Name also, and of the same Endowments and Employments with his Father; and this Third *Adam Winthrop* was the Father of that Renowned *John Winthrop*, who was the Father of *New-England*, and the Founder of a *Colony*, which, upon many Accounts, like him that Founded it, may challenge the *First Place* among the *English* Glories of *America*. Our JOHN WINTHROP, thus Born at the Mansion-House of his Ancestors, at *Groton* in *Suffolk*, on June 12, 1587,<sup>84</sup> enjoyed afterwards an agreeable Education. But though he would rather have Devoted himself unto the Study of Mr. *John Calvin*, than of Sir *Edward Cook*; nevertheless, the Accomplishments of a Lawyer were those wherewith Heaven made his chief Opportunities to be Serviceable.

§3. Being made, at the unusually early Age of *Eighteen*, a *Justice of Peace*, his Virtues began to fall under a more general Observation; and he not only so Bound himself to the Behaviour of a *Christian*, as to become Exemplary for a Conformity to the *Laws of Christianity* in his own Conversation, but also discovered a more than ordinary Measure of those Qualities which adorn an Officer of *Humane Society*. His *Justice* was Impartial, and used the *Ballance* to weigh not the *Cash*, but the *Case* of those who were before him: *Prosopolatry*<sup>85</sup> he reckoned as bad as *idolatry*:<sup>86</sup> His *Wisdom* did exquisitely Temper things according to the *Art of Governing*, which is a Business of more Contrivance than the *Seven Arts* of the *Schools*: Oyer still went before *Terminer*<sup>87</sup> in all

<sup>80</sup> "O, that the end of life may be as sweet for me."

<sup>81</sup> "Shepherd and feeder of the human flock."

<sup>82</sup> "The American Nehemiah."

<sup>83</sup> "Whatever winds shall blow, our art surely shall not die."

<sup>84</sup> Now generally given as January 12, 1587/8.

<sup>85</sup> "Worship of persons."

<sup>86</sup> "Worship of Idols."

<sup>87</sup> "Hearing" still went before "Judging."

his Administrations: his *Courage* made him *Dare to do right*, and fitted him to stand among the *Lions* that have sometimes been the *Supporters* of the Throne: All which Virtues he rendred the more Illustrious, by *Emblazoning* them with the Constant *Liberality* and *Hospitality* of a *Gentleman*. This made him the *Terror* of the Wicked, and the *Delight* of the Sober, the *Envy* of the many, but the *Hope* of those who had any *Hopeful Design* in hand for the Common Good of the Nation and the Interests of Religion.

§4. Accordingly when the *Noble Design* of carrying a Colony of *Chosen People* into an *American Wilderness*, was by some Eminent Persons undertaken, *This* Eminent Person was, by the Consent of all, *Chosen* for the *Moses*, who must be the Leader of so great an Undertaking: And indeed nothing but a *Mosaic Spirit* could have carried him through the *Temptations*, to which either his *Farewel* to his own *Land*, or his *Travel* in a *Strange Land*, must needs expose a Gentleman of his *Education*. Wherefore 20 having Sold a fair Estate of Six or Seven Hundred a Year, he Transported himself with the Effects of it into *New-England* in the Year 1630, where he spent it upon the service of a famous Plantation, founded and formed for the Seat of the most *Reformed Christianity*: And continued there, conflicting with *Temptations* of all sorts, as many Years as the *Nodes of the Moon* take to dispatch a revolution.<sup>88</sup> Those Persons were never concerned in a *New-Plantation*, who know not that the unavoidable Difficulties of such a 30 thing, will call for the *Prudence* and *Patience* of a Mortal Man to Encounter therewithal; and they must be very insensible of the Influence, which the *Just Wrath* of Heaven has permitted the *Devils* to have upon *this World*, if they do not think that the Difficulties of a *New-Plantation*, devoted unto the *Evangelical Worship* of our Lord Jesus Christ, must be yet more than Ordinary. How *Prudently*, how *Patiently*, and with how much *Resignation* to our Lord Jesus Christ, our brave *Winthrop* waded through these 40 *Difficulties*, let Posterity Consider with Admiration. And know, that as the *Picture* of this their *Governour*, was, after his *Death*, hung up with Honour in the *State-House* of his Country, so the *Wisdom*, *Courage*, and *Holy Zeal* of his *Life*, were an Example well-worthy to be Copied by all that shall succeed him in *Government*.

§5. Were he now to be consider'd only as a *Chris-*

*tian*, we might therein propose him as greatly Imitable. He was a very *Religious Man*; and as he strictly kept his *Heart*, so he kept his *House*, under the Laws of *Piety*; *there* he was every Day constant in Holy Duties, both Morning and Evening, and on the *Lord's Days*, and *Lectures*; though he *wrote* not after the Preacher, yet such was his *Attention*, and such his *Retention* in *Hearing*, that he repeated unto his *Family* the *Sermons* which he had heard in the Congregation. But it is chiefly as a *Governour* that he is now to be consider'd. Being the *Governour* over the considerablest Part of *New-England*, he maintain'd the Figure and Honour of his Place with the Spirit of a true *Gentleman*; but yet with such obliging *Condescension* to the Circumstances of the Colony, that when a certain troublesome and malicious Calumniator, well known in those times, printed his Libellous *Nick-Names* upon the chief Persons here, the worst *Nick-Name* he could find for the Governour was *John Temper-well*; and when the Calumnies of that ill Man caused the Arch-Bishop to Summon one Mr. *Cleaves* before the King, in hopes to get some Accusation from him against the Country, Mr. *Cleaves* gave such an Account of the Governour's laudable Carriage in all Respects, and the serious Devotion wherewith Prayers were both publicly and privately made for His Majesty, that the King expressed himself most highly *Pleased* therewithal, only *Sorry* that so Worthy a Person should be no better Accommodated than with the Hardships of *America*. He was, indeed, a *Governour*, who had most exactly studied that Book, which, pretending to Teach *Politicks*, did only contain *Three Leaves*, and but *One Word* in each of those Leaves, which Word was, MODERATION. Hence, though he were a Zealous Enemy to all *Vice*, yet his *Practice* was according to his *Judgment* thus expressed; *In the Infancy of Plantations, Justice should be administered with more Lenity than in a settled State; because People are more apt then to Transgress; partly out of Ignorance of new Laws and Orders, partly out of Oppression of Business, and other straits.* LENTO GRADU<sup>89</sup> *was the old rule; and if the Strings of a new Instrument be wound up unto their height, they will quickly crack.* But when some Leading and Learned Men took Offence at his Conduct in this Matter, and upon a Conference gave it in as their Opinion, *That a stricter Discipline was to be used in the beginning of a*

<sup>88</sup> 18.6 years.

<sup>89</sup> "By slow degrees."

*Plantation, than after its being with more Age established and confirmed*, the Governour being readier to see *his own Errors* than *other Men's*, professed his Purpose to endeavour their Satisfaction with less of *Lenity* in his Administrations. At that *Conference* there were drawn up several other *Articles* to be observed between the Governour and the rest of the *Magistrates*, which were of this Import: *That the Magistrates*, as far as might be, should aforehand ripen their *Consultations*, to produce that *Unanimity* 10 in their *Publick Votes*, which might make them liker to the *Voice of God*; *that* if Differences fell out among them in their *Publick Meetings*, they should speak only to the Case, without any Reflection, with all due *Modesty*, and but by way of *Question*; or Desire the deferring of the *Cause* to further time; and after *Sentence* to imitate privately no *Dislike*; *that* they should be more *Familiar*, Friendly and Open unto each other, and more frequent in their *Visitations*, and not any way expose each other's 20 *Infirmities*, but seek the *Honour* of each other, and all the Court; *that* One Magistrate shall not cross the Proceedings of another, without first advising with him; and *that* they should in all their Appearances abroad, be so circumstanced as to prevent all Contempt of Authority; and *that* they should Support and Strengthen all *Under Officers*. All of which *Articles* were observed by no Man more than by the Governour himself.

§6. But whilst he thus did as our *New-English* 30 *Nehemiah*, the part of a Ruler in Managing the Public Affairs of our *American Jerusalem*, when there were *Tobijahs* and *Sanballats* enough to vex him, and give him the Experiment of *Luther's* Observation, *Omnis qui regit est tanquam signum, in quod omnia Jacula, Satan et Mundus dirigunt*,<sup>90</sup> he made himself still an exacter *Parallel* unto that governour of *Israel*, by doing the part of a *Neighbour* among the distressed People of the *New-Plantation*. To teach them the *Frugality* necessary for those times, he 40 abridged himself of a Thousand comfortable things, which he had allow'd himself elsewhere: His *Habit* was not that *soft Raiment*, which would have been disagreeable to a *Wilderness*; his *Table* was not covered with the *Superfluities* that would have invited unto *Sensualities*: *Water* was commonly his own *Drink*, though he gave *Wine* to others. But at the

same time his *Liberality* unto the Needy was even beyond measure *Generous*; and therein he was continually causing the *Blessing of him that was ready to Perish to come upon him, and the Heart of the Widow and the Orphan to sing for Joy*: But more than those of *Deccas'd Ministers*, whom he always treated with a very singular *Compassion*; among the Instances whereof we still enjoy with us the *Worthy* and now *Aged Son* of that Reverend *Higginson*, whose Death left his Family in a wide World soon after his arrival here, publicly acknowledging the *Charitable Winthrop* for his *Foster-Father*. It was oftentimes no small Trial unto his *Faith*, to think, *How a Table for the People should be furnished when they first came into the Wilderness!* And for very many of the People, his own good Works were needful, and accordingly employed for the answering of his *Faith*. Indeed, for a while the Governour was the *Joseph*, unto whom the whole Body of the People repaired when their *Corn* failed them: And he continued Relieving of them with his *open-handed Bounties*, as long as he had any Stock to do it with; and a lively *Faith* to see the return of the *Bread after many Days*, and not *Starve* in the Days that were to pass till that *return* should be *seen*, carried him chearfully through those Expenses.

Once it was observable that, on *February 5, 1630*,<sup>91</sup> when he was distributing the last Handful of the *Meal in the Barrel* unto a Poor Man distressed by the *Wolf at the Door*, at that Instant they spied a Ship arrived at the Harbour's Mouth, laden with *Provisions* for them all. Yea, the Governour sometimes made his own *private Purse* to be the *Publick*: not by *sucking* into it, but by *squeezing* out of it; for when the *Publick Treasure* had nothing in it, he did himself defray the Charges of the *Publick*. And having learned that Lesson of our Lord, *That it is better to Give, than to Receive*, he did, at the General Court, when he was a Third time chosen Governour, make a Speech unto this purpose: *That he had received Gratuities from divers Towns, which he accepted with much Comfort and Content; and he had likewise received Civilities from particular Persons, which he could not refuse without Incivility in himself: Nevertheless, he took them with a trembling Heart, in regard of God's Word, and the Conscience of his own Infirmities; and therefore he desired them that they would not hereafter take it Ill if he refused*

<sup>90</sup> "Everyone who rules is like a target against which Satan and the world aim their darts."

<sup>91</sup> That is, February 5, 1630/1.

*such Presents for the time to come.* 'Twas his Custom also to send some of his Family upon Errands unto the Houses of the Poor, about their Meal-time, on purpose to *spy* whether they *wanted*; and if it were found that they *wanted*, he would make *that* the Opportunity of sending Supplies unto them. And there was one Passage of his *Charity* that was perhaps a little *unusual*: In an hard and long Winter, when Wood was very scarce at *Boston*, a Man gave him a private *Information* that a needy Person in the Neighbourhood stole Wood sometimes from *his* Pile; whereupon the Governour in a seeming Anger did reply, *Does he so? I'll take a Course with him; go, call that man to me, I'll warrant you I'll cure him of Stealing!* When the Man came, the Governour considering that if he had *Stoln*, it was more out of *Necessity* than *Disposition*, said unto him, *Friend, it is a severe Winter, and I doubt you are but meanly provided for Wood; wherefore I would have you supply your self at my Wood-Pile till this cold Season be* <sup>20</sup> *over.* And he then Merrily asked his Friends, *Whether he had not effectually cured this Man of Stealing his Wood?*

§7. One would have imagined that so good a Man could have had no *Enemies*; if we had not had a daily and woful Experience to Convince us, that *Goodness* it self will *make* *Enemies*. It is a wonderful Speech of *Plato*, (in one of his books, *De Republica*.) *For the trial of true Vertue, 'tis necessary that a good man μηδὲν ἀδικῶν, δοῦσαν εἴη τὴν μεγίστην ἀδικίαν;* <sup>30</sup> *Tho' he do no unjust thing, should suffer the Infamy of the greatest Injustice.* The Governour had by his unspotted *Integrity* procured himself a great Reputation among the *People*; and then the Crime of *Popularity* was laid unto his Charge by such, who were willing to deliver him from the Danger of having *all Men speak well of him.* Yea, there were Persons eminent both for Figure and for Number, unto whom it was almost *Essential* to *dislike* every thing that came from *him*; and yet *he* always maintained <sup>40</sup> an Amicable Correspondence with them; as believing that they acted according to their Judgment and Conscience, or that their Eyes were held by some *Temptation* in the worst of all their Oppositions. Indeed, his *right Works* were so many, that they exposed him unto the *Envy* of his Neighbours; and of such *Power* was that *Envy*, that sometimes he could not *stand before it*; but it was by *not standing* that he most effectually *withstood* it all. Great Attempts were

sometimes made among the *Freemen* to get him left out from his Place in the *Government* upon little Pretences, lest by the too *frequent choice* of *One Man*, the *Government* should cease to be by *Choice*; and with a particular aim at *him*, Sermons were Preached at the Anniversary Court of *election*, to dissuade the *Freemen* from chusing *One Man* Twice together. This was the Reward of his *extraordinary Serviceableness!* But when these Attempts *did* succeed, as they sometimes *did*, his Profound *Humility* appeared in that *Equality of Mind*, wherewith he applied himself cheerfully to serve the Country in whatever Station their *Votes* had allotted for him. And one Year when the *Votes* came to be Numbered, there were found Six less for Mr. *Winthrop*, than for another Gentleman who then stood in Competition: But several other persons regularly Tending their *Votes* before the *Election* was published, were upon a very frivolous Objection, refused by some of the Magistrates, that were afraid lest the *Election* should at last fall upon Mr. *Winthrop*: Which, though it was well perceived, yet such was the *Self-denial* of this *Patriot*, that he would not permit any Notice to be taken of the Injury. But these *Trials* were nothing in Comparison of those harsher and harder *Treats*, which he sometimes had from the *Frowardness* of not a few in the Days of their *Paroxisms*; and from the *Faction* of some against him, not much unlike that of the *Piazzis* in *Florence* against the Family of the *Medices*: All of which he at last Conquered by Conforming to the famous Judge's Motto, *Prudens qui Patiens.* <sup>92</sup> The Oracles of God have said, *Envy is rottenness to the Bones*; and *Gulielmus Parisien-sis* <sup>93</sup> applies it unto Rulers, who are as it were the *bones* of the Societies which they belong unto: *Envy*, says he, *is often found among them, and it is rottenness unto them.* Our *Winthrop* Encountred this *Envy* from others, but Conquered it, by being free from it himself.

§8. Were it not for the sake of introducing the Exemplary Skill of this Wise Man, *at giving soft Answers*, one would not chuse to Relate those Instances of *Wrath*, which he had sometimes to Encounter with; but he was for his *Gentleness*, his *Forbearance*, and *Longanimity*, a Pattern so worthy to be Written *after*, that something must here be Written of it. He seemed indeed never to speak any

<sup>92</sup> "He is prudent who is patient."

<sup>93</sup> William, who became Bishop at Paris (in 1228).

other Language than that of *Theodosius*:<sup>94</sup> *If any Man speak evil of the Governour, if it be thro' Lightness, 'tis to be contemned; if it be thro' Madness, 'tis to be pitied, if it be thro' Injury, 'tis to be remitted.* Behold, Reader, the *Meekness of Wisdom* notably exemplified! There was a time when he received a very sharp Letter from a Gentleman who was a Member of the Court, but he delivered back the Letter unto the Messengers that brought it, with such a Christian Speech as this: *I am not willing to keep such a matter of Provocation by me!* Afterwards the same Gentleman was compelled by the scarcity of Provisions to send unto him that he would Sell him some of his Cattel; whereupon the Governour prayed him to accept what he had sent for as a *Token* of his Good Will; but the Gentleman returned him this Answer: *Sir, your overcoming of your self hath overcome me;* and afterwards gave Demonstration of it. The French have a saying, *That Un Honeste Homme, est un Homme mesle!* A good Man is a mixt 20 Man; and there hardly ever was a more sensible Mixture of those Two things, *Resolution* and *Condescension*, than in this good Man. There was a time when the Court of *Election*, being for fear of Tumult, held at *Cambridge*, May 17. 1637. The Sectarian part of the Country, who had the Year before gotten a *Governour* more unto their Mind, had a Project now to have confounded the *Election*, by demanding that the Court would consider a *Petition* then tendered before their Proceeding thereunto. Mr. Win- 30 throp saw that this was only a Trick to throw all into Confusion, by putting off the *Choice* of the *Governour* and *Assistants* until the *Day* should be over; and therefore he did, with a strenuous *Resolution*, procure a disappointment unto that mischievous and ruinous Contrivance. Nevertheless, Mr. Winthrop himself being by the Voicc of the Freemen in this Exigence chosen the *Governour*, and all of the other Party left out, that ill-affected Party discovered the *Dirt* and *Mire*, which remained with them, after the 40 *Storm* was over; particularly the *Serjeants*, whose office 'twas to attend the *Governour*, laid down their Halberts; but such was the *Condescension* of this Governour, as to take no present Notice of this Anger and Contempt, but only Order some of his own Servants to take the Halberts; And when the Country manifested their deep Resentments of the Affront thus offered him, he prayed them to overlook it. But

<sup>94</sup> Theodosius I (346?-395), Roman emperor (379-395).

it was not long before a Compensation was made for these things by the *doubled Respects* which were from all Parts paid unto him. Again, there was a time when the Suppression of an *Antinomian* and *Familistical* faction,<sup>95</sup> which extremely threatened the Ruin of the Country, was generally thought much owing unto this Renowned man; and therefore when the Friends of that faction could not wreak their Displeasur on him with any *Politick* Vexations, they set themselves to do it by *Ecclesiastical* ones.<sup>96</sup> Accordingly when a sentence of *Banishment* was passed on the Ringleaders of those Disturbances, who

—*Maria et Terras, Cælumq; profundum,  
Quippe ferant, Rapidi, secum vertantq; per Auras;*<sup>97</sup>

many at the Church of *Boston*, who were then that way too much inclined, most earnestly solicited the Elders of that Church, whereof the Governour was a Member, to call him forth as an *Offender*, for passing of that Sentence. The Elders were unwilling to do any such thing; but the governour understanding the *Ferment* among the *People* took that occasion to make a Speech in the Congregation to this Effect: 'Brethren: Understanding that some of you have desired that I should Answer for an *Offence* lately taken 'among you; had I been called upon so to do, I would, 'First, Have advised with the Ministers of the Country, whether the *Church* had Power to call in Question the *Civil Court*; and I would, Secondly, Have 'advised with the rest of the Court, whether I might 'discover their Counsels unto the *Church*. But though 'I know that the Reverend Elders of this Church, and 'some others, do very well apprehend that the *Church* 'cannot enquire into the Proceedings of the Court; 'yet, for the Satisfaction of the weaker, who do not 'apprehend it, I will declare my Mind concerning it. 'If the *Church* have any such Power, they have it 'from the Lord Jesus Christ; but the Lord Jesus Christ 'hath disclaimed it, not only by *Practice*, but also by 'Precept, which we have in his Gospel, *Mat. 20. 25,* '26. It is true, indeed, that *Magistrates*, as they are

<sup>95</sup> A reference to the difficulties occasioned by Anne Hutchinson.

<sup>96</sup> Misprint for *Ecclesiastical*. The passage refers to the Antinomian controversy provoked by Anne Hutchinson and John Wheelwright in 1636-1637. Besides maintaining the "heretical" doctrine that men could commune directly with God, the Antinomians held that the moral law could be disregarded since faith alone is needed for salvation.

<sup>97</sup> "Rack sea and land and sky with mingled wrath,  
In the wild tumult of their stormy path."



'Church-Members, are accountable unto the Church for their Failings; but that is when they are out of their Calling. When *Uzziah* would go offer Incense in the Temple the Officers of the Church called him to an account, and withstood him; but when *Asa* put the Prophet in Prison, the Officers of the Church did not call him to an account for that. If the Magistrate shall in a private way wrong any Man, the Church may call him to an Account for it; but if he be in Pursuance of a Course of Justice, though the thing is that he does be unjust, yet he is not accountable for it before the Church. As for myself, I did nothing in the Causes of any of the Brethren, but by the Advice of the Elders of the Church. Moreover, in the Oath, which I have taken there is this Clause: *In all Cases wherein you are to give your Vote, you shall do as in your Judgment and Conscience you shall see to be Just, and for the publick Good.* And I am satisfied, it is most for the Glory of God, and the publick Good, that there has been such a Sentence passed; yea, those Brethren are so divided from the rest of the Country in their Opinions and Practices, that it cannot stand with the publick Peace for them to continue with us; *Abraham* saw that *Hagar* and *Ishmael* must be sent away.' By such a Speech he marvellously convinced, satisfied and mollified the uneasy Brethren of the Church; *Sic cunctus Pelagi cecidit Frigor.*<sup>98</sup> And after a little patient waiting, the differences all so wore away, that the Church, meerly as a Token of Respect unto the Governour when he had newly met with some Losses in his Estate, sent him a Present of several Hundreds of Pounds. Once more there was a time when some active Spirits among the Deputies of the Colony, by their endeavours not only to make themselves a Court of Judicature, but also to take away the Negative<sup>99</sup> by which the Magistrates might check their Votes, had like by over-driving to have run the whole Government into something too Democratical. And if there were a Town in *Spain* undermined by *Coneys*, another town in *Thrace* destroyed by *Moles*, a third in *Greece* ransacked by *Frogs*, a fourth in *Germany* subverted by *Rats*; I must on this Occasion add, that there was a Country in *America* like to be confounded by a *Swine*. A certain stray Sow being found, was claimed by Two several Persons with a Claim so equally maintained on both sides, that after Six or Seven years'

Hunting the Business from one Court unto another, it was brought at last into the General Court, where the final Determination was, that it was impossible to proceed unto any Judgment in the Case. However, in the debate of this Matter, the Negative of the Upper-House upon the Lower in that Court was brought upon the Stage; and agitated with so hot a Zeal, that a little more and all had been in the Fire. In these Agitations, the Governour was informed that an offence had been taken by some eminent Persons at certain passages in a Discourse by him written thereabout; whereupon, with his usual Condescendency, when he next came into the General Court, he made a Speech of this Import: 'I understand that some have taken Offence at something that I have lately written; which Offence I desire to remove now, and begin this Year in a reconciled State with you all. As for the Matter of my Writing, I had the Concurrence of my Brethren; it is a Point of Judgment which is not at my own disposing. I have examined it over and over again by such Light as God has given me, from the Rules of Religion, Reason, and Custom; and I see no cause to Retract any thing of it: Wherefore I must enjoy my Liberty in that, as you do yourselves. But for the Manner, this, and all that was blame-worthy in it, was wholly my own; and whatsoever I might alledge for my own Justification therein before Men, I wave it, as now setting my self before another Judgment-Seat. However, what I wrote was upon great Provocation, and to vindicate my self and others from great Aspersion; yet that was no sufficient Warrant for me to allow any Distemper of Spirit in my self; and I doubt I have been too prodigal of my Brethren's Reputation; I might have maintained my Cause without casting any Blemish upon others, when I made that my Conclusion, And now let Religion and sound Reason give Judgment in the Case; it looked as if I arrogated too much unto my self, and too little to others. And when I made that Profession, That I would maintain what I wrote before all the World, though such Words might modestly be spoken, yet I perceive an unbecoming Pride of my own Heart breathing in them. For these failings, I ask Pardon of God and Man.'

*Sic ait, et dicto citius Tumida Equora placat.  
Collectasq; fugat; Nubes, Solemq; reducit.*<sup>100</sup>

<sup>98</sup> "So all the din of the sea subsided."

<sup>99</sup> The veto power.

<sup>100</sup> "Thus he spoke, and so calmed the swelling sea, dispelled the gathered clouds, and brought back the sun."



This *acknowledging Disposition* in the Governour made them all *acknowledge*, that he was truly a *Man of an excellent Spirit*. In fine, the *Victories* of an *Alexander*, an *Hannibal*, or a *Cæsar* over *other Men*, were not so Glorious as the *Victories* of this great Man over *himself*, which also at last prov'd *Victories* over *other Men*.

§9. But the stormiest of all the *Trials* that ever befel this Gentleman, was in the Year 1645, when he was, in *Title*, no more than *Deputy-Governour* of the Colony. If the famous *Cato* were Forty-four times call'd into Judgment, but as often acquitted; let it not be wondred, and if our Famous *Winthrop* were one time so. There hapning certain Seditious and Mutinous Practices in the town of *Hingham*, the *Deputy-Governour*, as legally as prudently interposed his *Authority* for the checking of them: Whereupon there followed such an *Enchantment* upon the minds of the *Deputies* in the General Court, that upon a scandalous Petition of the Delinquents unto them, wherein a pretended Invasion made upon the *Liberties* of the *People* was complained of, the *Deputy-Governour*, was most irregularly call'd forth unto an *Ignominious Hearing* before them in a vast Assembly; whereto with a *Sagacious Humility* he *consented*, although he shew'd them how he might have *Refused* it. The result of that *Hearing* was, that notwithstanding the touchy *Jealousie* of the *People* about their *Liberties* lay at the bottom of all this Prosecution, yet Mr. *Winthrop* was publickly *Acquitted*, and the Offenders were severally *Fined* and *Censured*. But Mr. *Winthrop* then resuming the place of *Deputy-Governour* on the Bench, saw cause to speak unto the *Root of the Matter* after this manner. 'I shall not now speak anything about the past *Proceedings* of this Court, or the *Persons* therein concerned. Only 'I bless God that I see an Issue of this troublesome *Affair*. I am well satisfied that I was publickly *Acquitted*, and that I am now publickly *Acquitted*. But 'though I am justified before *Men*, yet it may be the Lord hath seen so much amiss in my *Administrations*, as calls me to be *humbled*; and, indeed for me 'to have been thus charged by *Men*, is it self a *Matter of Humiliation*, whereof I desire to make a right use 'before the Lord. If *Miriam's* Father spit in her Face, 'she is to be *Ashamed*. But give me leave, before you 'go, to say something that may rectify the *Opinions* 'of many *People*, from whence the *Distempers* have 'risen that have lately prevailed upon the *Body* of

this *People*. The Questions that have troubled the 'country have been about the *Authority of the Magistracy*, and the *Liberty of the People*. It is *You* who 'have called us unto this Office; but being thus called, 'we have our *Authority* from God; it is the *Ordinance of God*, and it hath the *Image of God* stamped upon 'it; and the contempt of it has been vindicated by 'God with terrible Examples of his Vengeance. I entreat you to consider, That when you chuse *Magistrates*, you take them from among your selves, *Men subject unto like Passions with your selves*. If you 'see our *Infirmities*, reflect on your own, and you will 'not be so severe *Censurers* of ours. We count him a 'good *Servant* who *breaks not his Covenant*: the *Covenant* between *Us* and *You*, is the *Oath* you have 'taken of us, which is to this Purpose, *That we shall govern you, and judge your Causes according to God's Laws, and our own, according to our best Skill*. 'As for our *Skill*, you must run the hazard of it; and 'if there be an Error, not in the *Will*, but only in 'Skill, it becomes you to bear it. Nor would I have you 'to mistake in the Point of your own *Liberty*. There is 'a *Liberty* of corrupt Nature, which is affected both 'by *Men* and *Beasts*, to do what they list; and this 'Liberty is inconsistent with *Authority*, impatient of 'all Restraint; by this *Liberty*, *Sumus Omnes Deteriores*; <sup>101</sup> 'Tis the Grand Enemy of *Truth* and *Peace*, 'and all the *Ordinances* of God are bent against it. 'But there is a *Civil*, a *Moral*, a *Federal Liberty*, which 'is the proper End and Object of *Authority*; it is a 'Liberty for that only which is *just* and *good*; for this 'Liberty you are to stand with the hazard of your very 'Lives; and whatsoever Crosses it, is not *Authority*, but 'a *Distemper* thereof. This *Liberty* is maintained in a 'way of *Subjection to Authority*; and the *Authority* 'set over you will in all *Administrations* for your good 'be quietly submitted unto, by all but such as have a 'Disposition to *shake off the Yoke*, and lose their true 'Liberty, by their murmuring at the Honour and 'Power of *Authority*.'

The *Spell* that was upon the Eyes of the *People* being thus dissolved, their *distorted* and *enraged* notions of things all vanished; and the *People* would not afterwards entrust the Helm of the *Weather-beaten Bark* in any other Hands but Mr. *Winthrop's* until he Died.

§10. Indeed, such was the *Mixture* of *distant Qualities* in him, as to make a most admirable

<sup>101</sup> "We are all the worse."

*Temper*; and his having a certain *Greatness of Soul*, which rendered him Grave, Generous, Courageous, Resolved, Well-applied, and every way a *Gentleman* in his Demcanour, did not hinder him from taking sometimes the old *Roman's* way to avoid Confusions, namely, *Cedendo*;<sup>102</sup> or from discouraging some things which are agreeable enough to most that wear the name of *Gentlemen*. Hereof I will give no instances but only *oppose* two Passages of his Life.

In the Year 1632, the Governour, with his Pastor, Mr. *Wilson*, and some other Gentleman, to settle a good understanding between the Two Colonies, travelled as far as *Plymouth*, more than Forty Miles, through an Howling Wilderness, no better accommodated in those early Days than the *Princes* that in *Solomon's* time saw *Servants on Horseback*, or than *Genus* and *Species* in the old Epigram, *going on Foot*. The difficulty of the *Walk*, was abundantly compensated by the Honourable, *first Reception*, and then *Dismission*, which they found from the Rulers of *Plymouth*; and by the good Correspondence thus established between the New Colonies, who were like the floating Bottels wearing this Motto, *Si Collidimur, Frangimur*.<sup>103</sup> But there were at this time in *Plymouth* two Ministers, leavened so far with the Humours of the *Rigid Separation*, that they insisted vehemently upon the Unlawfulness of calling any *unregenerate* Man by the Name of *Good-man such an One*, until by their indiscreet urging of this Whimsy, the place began to be disquieted. The wiser People being troubled at these Trifles, they took the opportunity of Governour *Winthrop's* being there, to have the thing publicly propounded in the Congregation; who in answer thereunto, distinguished between a *Theological* and a *Moral Goodness*; adding, that when *Juries* were first used in *England*, it was usual for the *Crier*, after the Names of Persons fit for that Service were called over, to bid them all, *Attend, Good Men and True*; whence it grew to be a *Civil Custom* in the *English Nation*, for Neighbours<sup>40</sup> living by one another, to call one another *Good-man such an one*: And it was pity now to make a stir about a *Civil Custom*, so innocently introduced. And that Speech of Mr. *Winthrop's* put a lasting stop to the Little, Idle, Whimsical *Conceits*, then beginning to grow Obstreperous. Nevertheless, there was one *Civil Custom* used in (and in few *but*) the *English*

*Nation*, which this Gentleman did endeavour to abolish in *this Country*; and that was, *The usage of Drinking to one another*. For although by *Drinking to one another*, no more is meant than an act of *Courtesie*, when one going to *Drink*, does Invite another to do so too, for the same Ends with himself; nevertheless the Governour (not altogether unlike to *Cleomenes*, of whom 'tis reported by *Plutarch*, ἀποντι οὐδεις ποτηριον προσεφερε. *Nolenti poculam nunquam præbuit*,<sup>104</sup>) considered the *Impertinency* and *Insignificancy* of this Usage, as to any of those Ends that are usually pretended for it; and that indeed it ordinarily served for no Ends at all, but only to provoke Persons unto *unseasonable* and perhaps *unreasonable* Drinking, and at last produce that abominable *Health-Drinking*, which the *Fathers* of old so severely rebuked in the *Pagans*, and which the *Papists* themselves do Condemn, when their Casuists pronounce it, *Peccatum mortale, provocare ad Æquales Calices, et Nefas Respondere*.<sup>105</sup> Wherefore in his own most Hospitable House he left it off, not out of any silly or stingy *Fancy*, but meerly that by his *Example* a greater *Temperance*, with *Liberty of Drinking*, might be Recommended, and sundry *Inconveniences* in Drinking avoided; and his *Example* accordingly began to be much followed by the sober People in *this Country*, as it now also begins among Persons of the *Highest Rank* in the *English Nation* it self; until an *Order of Court* came to be made against that *Ceremony* in Drinking, and then, the old *Wont* violently returned, with a *Nitimur in Vetitum*.<sup>106</sup>

§11. Many were the Afflictions of this Righteous man! He lost much of his Estate in a Ship, and in an House, quickly after his coming to *New-England*, besides the Prodigious Expence of it in the Difficulties of his first coming hither. Afterwards his assiduous Application unto the Publick Affairs, (whercin *Ipse se non habuit, postquam Respublica eum Gubernatorem habere coepit*)<sup>107</sup> made him so much to neglect his own *private Interests*, that an *unjust Steward* ran him 2500 l. in debt before he was aware; for the Payment whereof he was forced, many Years before his Deccase, to sell the most of what he had left unto him in the Country. Albeit, by the observ-

<sup>102</sup> "By yielding."

<sup>103</sup> "If we collide, we break."

<sup>104</sup> "Never urged the unwilling to drink."

<sup>105</sup> "It is a mortal sin to challenge another to drink, and it is impious to accept such a challenge."

<sup>106</sup> "A bias towards what is forbidden."

<sup>107</sup> "He no longer owned himself after the state began to possess him as governor."

able Blessings of God upon all Posterity of this *Liberal Man*, his Children all of them came to fair Estates, and lived in good Fashion and Credit. Moreover, he successively Buried Three Wives; the First of which was the Daughter and Heiress of Mr. *Forth*, of *Much-Stambridge* in *Essex*, by whom he had *Wisdom with an Inheritance*; and an excellent Son. The Second was the Daughter of Mr. *William Clopton*, of *London*, who Died with her Child, within a very little while. The Third was the Daughter of the truly <sup>10</sup>Worshipful Sir *John Tyndal*, who made it her whole Care to please, First *God*, and then her *Husband*; and by whom he had Four Sons, which Survived and Honoured their Father. And unto all these, the Addition of the *Distempers*, ever now and then raised in the *Country*, procured unto him a very singular share of Trouble; yea, so hard was the Measure which he found even among Pious Men, in the Temptations of a *Wilderness*, that when the *Thunder* and *Lightning* had smitten a *Wind-mill* whereof he was Owner, <sup>20</sup>some had *such things in their Heads*, as publickly to Reproach this *Charitablest* of Men, as if the *Voice of the Almighty* had rebuked, I know not what *Opposition*, which they *judged* him Guilty of: which things I would not have mentioned, but that the Instances may fortifie the Expectations of my *best Readers* for such Afflictions.

§12. He that had been for his Attainments, as they said of the blessed *Macarius*, a *Παῖδαριος* (An *old Man while a young One*), and that had in his <sup>30</sup>young Days met with many of those *Ill Days*, whereof he could say, he had *little Pleasure in them*; now found *old Age* in its Infirmities advancing Earlier upon him, than it came upon his much longer lived Progenitors. While he was yet Seven Years off of that which we call *the grand Climacterical*,<sup>108</sup> he felt the Approaches of his *Dissolution*; and finding he could say,

*Non Habitus, non ipse Color non Gressus Eutnis,  
Non Species Eadem, quæ fuit ante, manet;*<sup>109</sup>

he then wrote this account of himself: *Age now comes upon me, and Infirmities therewithal, which makes me apprehend that the time of my departure out of this World is not far off. However our times are all in the Lord's Hand, so as we need not trouble our Thoughts how long or short they may be, but*

<sup>108</sup> That is, he attained the age of sixty-three.

<sup>109</sup> "There remains not the semblance, nor even the color, nor the way of life, nor the same aspect, of what was before."

*how we may be found Faithful when we are called for.* But at last when *that Year* came, he took a *Cold* which turned into a *Feaver*, whereof he lay *Sick* about a Month, and in that *Sickness*, as it hath been observed, that there was allowed unto the *Serpent* the *bruising of the Heel*; and accordingly at the *Heel* or the *Close* of our Lives the *old Serpent* will be Nibbling more than ever in our Lives before; and when the Devil sees that we shall shortly be, *where the wicked cease from troubling*, that *wicked One* will trouble us more than ever; so this eminent Saint now underwent sharp Conflicts with the *Tempter*, whose *Wrath* grew *Great*, as the *Time* to exert it grew *Short*; and he was Buffeted with the Disconsolate Thoughts of Black and Sore *Desertions*, wherein he could use that sad Representation of his own condition.

*Nuper Eram Judex; Jam Judicor, Ante Tribunal,  
Subsistens paveo, Judicor ipse modo.*<sup>110</sup>

But it was not long before those *Clouds* were Dispelled, and he enjoyed in his Holy Soul the *Great Consolations of God*! While he thus lay *Ripening* for Heaven, he did out of Obedience unto the *Ordinance* of our Lord, send for the *Elders of the Church* to *Pray* with him; yea, they and the whole Church *Fasted* as well as *Prayed* for him; and in that *Fast* the venerable *Cotton* preached on *Psal. 35. 13, 14*: *When they were Sick, I humbled my self with Fasting; I behaved my self as though he had been my Friend or* <sup>40</sup>*Brother; I bowed down heavily, as one that Mourned for his Mother*: From whence I find him raising that Observation, *The Sickness of one that is to us as a Friend, a Brother, a Mother, is a just occasion of deep humbling our Souls with Fasting and Prayer*; and making this Application:

'Upon this occasion we are now to attend this Duty for 'a Governor, who has been to us as a *Friend* in his *Counsel* 'for all things, and *Help* for our *Bodies* by *Physick*, for our 'Estates by *Law*, and of whom there was no fear of his 'becoming an *Enemy*, like the *Friends of David*: A *Governour* who has been unto us as a *Brother*; not usurping 'Authority over the Church; often speaking his *Advice*, and 'often contradicted, even by Young Men, and some of low 'degree; yet not replying, but offering Satisfaction also 'when any supposed Offences have arisen; a *Governour* who 'has been unto us as a *Mother*, Parent-like distributing his 'Goods to Brethren and Neighbours at his first coming: 'and gently bearing our *Infirmities* without taking notice 'of them.'

<sup>110</sup> "Once I was the judge; now I am judged. I stand trembling before the judge, now I myself am judged."

Such a Governour, after he had been more than Ten several times by the People chosen their Governour, was New-England now to lose; who having, like Jacob, first left his Council and Blessing with his Children gathered about his Bed-side; and, like David, served his Generation by the Will of God, he gave up the Ghost, and fell asleep on March 26, 1649. Having, like the dying Emperour Valentinian, this above all his other Victories for his Triumphs, His overcoming of himself.

The words of Josephus about Nehemiah, the Gov-

ernour of Israel, we will now use upon this Governour of New-England, as his

## EPITAPH.

Ἀνὴρ ἐγένετο χρητὸς τὴν φύσιν, καὶ δίκαιος.  
Καὶ περὶ τοῦς ὁμοεθνεῖς φιλοτιμώτατος.  
Μνημεῖον αἰώνιον αὐτῷ καταλιπὼν, τὰ τῶν  
Ἱεροσολυμῶν τεῖχῃ.

VIR FUIT INDOLE BONUS, AC JUSTUS;  
ET POPULARIUM GLORIÆ AMANTISSIMUS;  
QUIBUS ETERNUM RELIQUIT MONUMENTUM,  
Novanglorum MÆNIA.<sup>111</sup>

1702

FROM

*Manductio ad Ministerium*<sup>112</sup>

## [THE FIRST POINT OF WISDOM]

§1. Intending to give you some DIRECTIONS for your Proceeding in the STUDIES, upon which you are Enttring, that you may be prepared and furnished for the Work of the Evangelical MINISTRY, to which you are designed; I shall not consult the Method which any of the twice Twelve, *Dissertationes de Studii*, (Collected by Elzivir in one little volumn) have 20 given you. But the Contemplation of DEATH shall be the FIRST Point of the Wisdom that my Advice must lead you to. In the FIRST Place, My Son, I advise you to consider yourself as a Dying Person, and one that must shortly put off this Earthly Tabernacle. I move you, I press you, To remember how short your Time is, yea, though it should reach to the longest that is ordinarily known among the Children of Men; and how much more short it may be made for ought you know, in the *Early Anticipations* of Mortality. Do 30 this, that you may do nothing like *Living in Vain*. Place yourself in the *Circumstances* of a Dying Person; your Breath failing, your Throat rattling, your Eyes with a dim Cloud, and your Hands with a damp Sweat upon them, and your Weeping Friends no longer able to retain you with them: And then entertain such sentiments of *this World*, and of the Work to be done in this World, that such a View must

needs inspire you withal. Such a *Numbring of your Days*, I hope, will compel you to *Apply your Heart unto Wisdom*; and Instruct and Excite you to spend your little TIME in such Things, and so Industriouslly, as may be a Matter of *Comfortable Reflection* at the End of your Days. . . . My Proposal is, That you would set apart *proper Times*, (And be surc, The *Present Time*!) to think, *What sort of Life shall I most approve when I come to Dye! In what Work shall I most wish to have lived, when I see that I am to Dye? What Method and Manner of Living shall I apprehend the most Eligible, when my Dying Hour is come upon me? Behold, What will give to the Young Man Knowledge and Discretion!*

## [WAYS TO DO GOOD]

§4. . . . My Son, My Advice to you, is, Begin betimes to take that Noble QUESTION into Consideration, *What Good may I be capable of doing in the World?* Have stated and proper Times for it, and these as often as may be, to consider on the QUESTION; and keep a Record of your Purposes. First with an humble and mournful sence how much you want that Wisdom, which is to *find out well-advised Inventions*, Look up to GOD your SAVIOUR, that by Him (who is the Wisdom of GOD) living in you, and leading of you, you may obtain a fair View of the *Opportunities to do Good*, which He has put into your Hand, that they may not be a Price in the Hand of a Fool; and a clear View of the *Methods* to be taken that this Good may be prosecuted, and your Desire sweetly accomplished. Then proceed and Enquire.

Enquire, First, *What shall I do for MY SELF, that*

<sup>111</sup> "He was a man naturally good and just, and most jealous for the honor of his countrymen; to them he left an eternal memorial—the walls of Jerusalem."

Mather's Latin paraphrase substitutes *New England* for *Jerusalem*.

<sup>112</sup> Originally published in Boston in 1726, this treatise gives directions for a candidate of the ministry, outlining his proper studies and describing conduct becoming a minister.

*I may MY SELF Improve in Knowledge and Goodness; and the Ends of those Means, which the Divine Cultivation employs upon me?*

Enquire, next, *What shall I do for my several RELATIVES, my Kindred according to the Flesh, that I may prove a Blessing in each of my Relations?* Take a Catalogue of them; and successively bestow *distinct Thoughts* upon them all.

Then go on to take some Cognizance of the several SOCIETIES to which you stand related; Especially the *Church* whercof you are a *Member* (and the *College*, if you belong to *That!*) Yea, the *Town*, and the *Land*, whercof you are an *Inhabitant*.

Think, *What Good is to be proposed and promoted here!* To what an Extent, O dear Son, and pleasant Child, may thy *Projections* carry thee!

*Particular Persons* in your Neighbourhood may now also be found out as *Objects* that *Good* may be done unto; The *Poor* for to be relieved; The *Sick* for to be visited; The *Sad* for to be comforted; and those that are *out of the Way*, to be reclaimed from the *Error of their Way*. Many of those whom you have distinguished in thus doing of *Good* unto them, you will find prove *Monsters of Ingratitude*. But let not this dishearten you. GOD is now trying of you, *Whether you will do Good for the pure sake of Good*; And you will this way have *Recompences* ascertained unto you, in the *Harvest*, when, *Whatever Good Thing any Man Does, the same shall he receive of the Lord*. . . .

[ON COLLEGE LOVE AFFAIRS]

§5. . . . That you may not suffer a *Vile Impediment* in your *Studies* and *Avocation* from them, I do now particularly warn you against the senseless Folly of an Entanglement in any *foolish Amour* while you are yet a *Student* at the *College*. 'Tis time enough to think of *Marriage* when your Condition in other Circumstances, as well as that of *Age*, will qualify you to make a *Wise Choice* in a Point which a very great *Felicity* or a very great *Calamity*, for the rest of your Days, will turn upon.

[ON POETRY AND LITERARY STYLE]

§8. Poetry . . . has been from the Beginning in such Request, that I must needs recommend unto you some Acquaintance with it. Though some have had a Soul so *Unmusical* that they have decried all *Verse*, as being but a meer *Playing* and *Fiddling*

upon *Words*; All *Versifying*, as it were more *Unnatural* than if we should chuse *Dancing* instead of *Walking*; and *Ryme*, as if it were but a sort of *Morisco Dancing*<sup>118</sup> with *Bells*: Yet I cannot wish you a Soul that shall be wholly *Unpoetical*. An Old *Horace* has left us an *Art of Poetry*, which you may do well to bestow a *Perusal* on. And besides your *Lyrick Hours*, I wish you may so far understand an *Epic Poem* that the Beauties of an *Homer* and a *Virgil* may be discerned with you. . . .

There has been a deal of a do about a *STYLE*; So much that I must offer you my Sentiments upon it. There is a *Way of Writing* wherein the Author endeavours that the Reader may have *something to the Purpose* in every Paragraph. There is not only a *Vigour* sensible in every *Sentence*, but the Paragraph is embellished with *Profitable References*, even to something beyond what is *directly spoken*. Formal and Painful *Quotations* are not studied; yet all that could be learnt from them is insinuated. The Writer pretends not unto *Reading*, yet he could not have writ as he does if he had not *Read* very much in his Time; and his Composites are not only a *Cloth of Gold*, but also stuck with as many *Jewels* as the Gown of a Russian Ambassador. This *Way of Writing* has been decried by many, and is at this Day more than ever so, for the same Reason, that in the old Story, the *Grapes* were decried, *That they were not Ripe*. A Lazy, Ignorant, Conceited Sett of Authors, would persuade the whole Tribe, to lay aside that *Way of Writing*, for the same Reason that one would have persuaded his Brethren to part with the Encumbrance of their *Bushy Tails*. But, however *Fashion* and *Humour* may prevail, they must not think that the Club at their *Coffee-House* is, *All the World*; but there will always be those, who will in this Case be governed by *Indisputable Reason*; And who will think, that the real Excellency of a Book will never ly in *saying of little*; That the less one has for his Money in a Book, 'tis really the more Valuable for it; and that the less one is instructed in a Book, and the more Superfluous *Margin*, and Superficial *Harangue*, and the less Substantial *Matter* one has in it, the more tis to be accounted of. . . . Nothing appears to me more Impertinent and Ridiculous than the *Modern Way*, [I cannot say, *Rule*; For they have *None*] of *Criticising*. The Blades that set up for

<sup>118</sup> That is, Morris dancing, or mumming dance, once common in England in pageants and May-day games.

*Criticks*, I know not who constituted or commission'd 'em!—they appear to me, for the most part as *Contemptible*, as they are a *Supercilious* Generation. For indeed no Two of them have the same *Style*; and they are as intollcrably Cross-Grain'd and severe in their Censures upon one another, as they are upon the rest of Mankind. But while each of them, conceitedly enough, sets up for the *Standard of Perfection*, we are entirely at a Loss which *Fire* to follow. Nor can you easily find any one thing wherein they agree for their *Style*, except perhaps a perpetual Care to give us Jeune and Empty Pages, without such *Touches of Erudition* (to speak in the *Style* of an Ingenious Traveller) as may make the Discourses less *Tedious*, and more *Enriching*, to the Mind of him that peruses them. There is much Talk of a *Florid Style*, obtaining among the Pens, that are most in Vogue; but how often would it puzzle one, even with the best Glasses to find the *Flowers*! And if they were to be Chastized for it, it would be with as much of 20 Justice, as *Jerom* was, for being a *Ciceronian*. After all, Every Man will have his own *Style*, which will distinguish him as much as his *Gate*:<sup>114</sup> And if you can attain to that which I have newly described, but always writing so as to give an *Easy Conveyance* unto your Ideas, I would not have you by any *Scourging* be driven out of your *Gate*, but if you must confess a *Fault* in it, make a Confession like that of the Lad, unto his Father while he was beating him for his *Versifying*.

However, since every Man will have his own *Style*, I would pray, that we may learn to treat one another with mutual *Civilities*, and *Condescensions*, and handsomely *indulge* one another, as *Gentlemen* do in other Matters.

I wonder what ails People, that they can't let *Cicero* write in the *Style* of *Cicero*, and *Seneca* write in the (much other!) *Style* of *Seneca*; and own that Both may please in their *several Ways*.—But I will freely tell you; what has made me consider the 40 *Humourists* that set up for *Criticks upon Style*, as the most *Unregardable Set of Mortals* in the World, is This! Far more *Illustrious Criticks* than any of those to whom I am now bidding *Defiance*, and no less

<sup>114</sup> That is, *gaii*.

Men than your *Erasmus's*, and your *Grotius's*,<sup>115</sup> have taxed the *Greek Style* of the *New Testament*, with I know not what *Solæcisms* and *Barbarisms*; And, how many *learned Folks* have Obscquiously run away with the Notion! Whereas 'tis an Ignorant and Insolent *Whimsey*; which they have been guilty of. It may be (and particularly by an Ingenious *Blackwal*,<sup>116</sup> it has been) Demonstrated, That the Gentlemen are mistaken in every one of their pretended Instances; All the Unquestionable *Classicks*, may be brought in, to convince them of their Mistakes. Those Glorious Oracles are as *pure Greek* as ever was written in the World; and so Correct; So Noble, so Sublime is their *Style*, that never any thing under the Cope of Heaven, but the Old Testament, has equall'd it. . . .

[ON MUSIC]

§10. . . . For MUSIC, I know not what well to say.—Do as you please. If you *Fancy* it, I don't *Forbid* it. Only do not for the sake of it Alienate your Time too much from those that are more Important Matters. It may be so, that you may serve your god better for the Refreshment of *One that can play well on an Instrument*. However, to accomplish yourself at *Regular Singing* is a thing that will be of *Daily Use* to you. For I would not have a Day pass you without *Singing*, but so as at the same time to *make a Melody in your Heart unto the Lord*. . . .

[ON WELL-STUDIED SERMONS]

§16. . . . The *First Thing*, which I have to demand of you, is, That you entertain the People of god with none but *Well-Studied Sermons*; and employ none but *well-beaten Oil* for the *Lamps* of the *Golden Candlestick*: And be nothing like him who was among the *Jews* called *The Plagiary Prophet*, and whose punishment was not an easy one. Heaven forbid, that you should be one of those *Pitiful Parsons*, to whom there has been that Advice given for the Discharge of their *Pastoral Care*: That *they should use other Men's Sermons*, rather than make any of their own. . . . 1726

<sup>115</sup> Hugo Grotius (1583–1645), Dutch jurist and Biblical commentator.

<sup>116</sup> Anthony Blackwall (1674–1730), English classical scholar and author of *The Sacred Classics Defended* (1725).

## JONATHAN EDWARDS (1703-1758)

Jonathan Edwards, the greatest of American theologians, was the last great champion of Calvinism. When he was born in 1703, at East Windsor, Connecticut, liberalism at Harvard had already driven Increase Mather into retirement; and Cotton Mather, exerting every effort to stave off the further decline of orthodoxy in New England, was working with might and main to serve the best interests of Yale, established in 1701 as a bulwark of defense against the rising tide of rationalism. Edwards came to play a very similar rôle for his generation to that which fate decreed for Cotton Mather in his time and place. For Yale, too, became infected with the new views shortly after Edwards' graduation in 1720, so that the Calvinists soon chalked off Yale as an asset to their cause, and in 1746 founded the College of New Jersey, later Princeton University, to stem the tide. Shortly after his *Freedom of the Will* (1754) established Edwards as the greatest living defender of the Calvinist faith, the trustees of Princeton called him from his obscure missionary post among the Indians at Stockbridge, Massachusetts, to assume the presidency of "Old Nassau." Whatever he might have done there for the cause was stopped in 1758 by his sudden death, brought on by inoculation against smallpox, within a few months after his inauguration.

Edwards, the fifth of eleven children and only son of a Calvinist preacher, was of orthodox ministerial ancestry. His father's service for more than sixty years in one congregation bespeaks his worth. For lack of good schools at East Windsor, young Edwards' schoolroom became his father's study, where he progressed so well under his father's direction that he entered Yale in 1716, during his thirteenth year. Already as a boy he was passionately fond of study, not only acquiring a knowledge of Latin, Greek, and Hebrew writings, but being especially interested in the pursuit of abstruse subjects. He early trained himself to read with pen or pencil in hand, and not only to think as he went along, but to put his thoughts into exact language, with the result that he early acquired an extraordinary perspicacity of mind.

Moses Coit Tyler relates the following story to illustrate the lad's unusual sagacity at the age of twelve.

Hearing that an older boy in the neighborhood held the opinion that the soul is material, and that it remained in the body until the resurrection day, young Edwards, instead of debating the question in the typical boyish fashion, wrote his friend a playful letter, ironically professing to be on the point of adopting the same opinions, but humbly submitting for solution a number of questions which served most ingeniously and effectively to expose the absurdities of his friend's doctrines. Here already are evident the peculiarities of Edwards' mind—a keenness of analysis, a faculty for discovering the absurdities involved in a false proposition, an unusual ability to set forth these absurdities in a manner at once fair and irresistible, an engaging sense of raillery, freedom from any arrogance of tone, and an adroit use of the Socratic strategy of a deferential manner in debate.

As an undergraduate at Yale (hence before his eighteenth year) he began the keeping of a notebook in which he tried to put into precise form the thoughts that came to him on subjects like being, cause, space, time, motion, matter, consciousness, union of mind and body, and personal identity. The following notation under the heading of "The Place of Minds" illustrates the nature of these early intellectual interests.

Our common way of conceiving of what is spiritual, is very gross, and shadowy, and corporeal, with dimensions, and figure, and so forth. If we would get a right notion of what is spiritual, we must think of thought, or inclination, or delight. How large is that thing in the mind which they call a thought? Is love square, or round? Is the surface of hatred rough, or smooth? Is joy an inch, or a foot, in diameter? These are spiritual things; and why should we then form such a ridiculous idea of spirits, as to think them so long, so thick, or so wide, or to think there is a necessity of their being square, or round, or some other certain figure?

Already as a lad of sixteen or seventeen he worked out for himself a system of idealistic philosophy that is essentially the same as Berkeley's. For example, at the end of his notes on "Being," while considering the relation between ideal reality and material existence, he asked:

What, then, is to become of the universe? Certainly, it exists nowhere but in the Divine mind. . . . Those beings which have knowledge and consciousness are the only proper, and real, and substantial beings; inasmuch as the being of other things is only by these. From thence we may see the gross mistake of those who think material things the most substantial beings, and spirits more like a shadow; whereas spirits only are properly substance. . . . The material universe exists only in the mind. . . . All material existence is only idea.

No wonder that with a mind so inclined he should devour eagerly the metaphysical books which he found in the Yale library. As a sophomore he discovered Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, and fell upon it, he tells us, with a greater delight "than the most greedy miser finds when gathering up handfuls of silver and gold from some newly discovered treasure."

While he continued to pursue philosophical inquiries with a passion, he was also interested in scientific questions. Already as a boy at East Windsor, he had indulged his curiosity about things in the realm of natural science. Out of this interest grew his composition on spiders, which his father encouraged him to write and to send to a learned correspondent in Europe with whom the elder Edwards was in the habit of exchanging intelligences and letters on scientific, metaphysical, and religious topics. In the resulting essay on spiders, Edwards detailed with great precision of statement and with equal cogency of reasoning his own observations, in a manner to make spiders as interesting as, many years later, Darwin was to make earthworms. Some years after, as a tutor at Yale, he pursued his scientific researches with great diligence, especially in physics and astronomy; and original notes of the time reveal that his acute, ingenious, and original mind anticipated a number of important scientific theories and discoveries. He did enough in mathematical investigations, in the physical sciences, and in linguistic studies to show that, given adequate outward facilities, he might easily have acquired the same fame in these areas that his contributions to mental science and divinity merit.

The intense intellectual training to which he subjected himself as a student was accompanied by equally rigorous moral and spiritual discipline. Much troubled about his own faith and salvation, he made, between 1720 and 1723, a series of seventy resolutions by which to regulate his life. The following are typical: "To live with all my might, while I do live." "To do whatever I think to be my duty." "Never to do any thing which I should be afraid to do, if it were the last hour of my life." "When I feel pain, to think of the pains of Martyrdom, and of Hell."

"Never to do any thing for revenge." "Never to speak anything but the pure and simple verity." "Never to give over in the least or slacken my fight with my corruptions, however unsuccessful I may be." On September 23, 1723, he made the important observation that "old men seldom have any advantage of new discoveries, because they are beside the way of thinking to which they have been so long used," and accordingly he resolved, "If ever I live to years, that I will be impartial to hear the reasons of all pretended discoveries, and receive them if rational, how long soever I have been used to another way of thinking."

Thus he sought to develop alike in scientific knowledge and moral perfection during the years between his graduation in 1720 and his becoming in 1726 the colleague of his grandfather Solomon Stoddard in the Northampton parish. Yet, through the earlier of the intervening years, two of which were devoted to studying divinity at Yale, another as pastor to a Presbyterian congregation in New York City, and the last two to tutoring at Yale, he felt the lack of a third element in his soul—the sense of religious perfection, the development of his religious affections toward an exalted, mystical sense of sweet and absolute dependence on God's sovereignty. His struggles came to a head in 1721, when he felt a conversion, described in the following terms:

From my childhood up, my mind had been full of objections against the doctrine of God's sovereignty, in choosing whom he would to eternal life, and rejecting whom he pleased; leaving them eternally to perish, and be everlastingly tormented in hell. It used to appear like a horrible doctrine to me. But I remember the time very well, when I seemed to be convinced, and fully satisfied, as to this sovereignty of God, and his justice in thus eternally disposing of men, according to his sovereign pleasure. . . . But I have often, since that first conviction, had quite another kind of sense of God's sovereignty than I had then. I have often since had not only a conviction, but a *delightful* conviction. The doctrine has very often appeared exceedingly pleasant, bright, and sweet. Absolute sovereignty is what I love to ascribe to God. . . .

The first instance, that I remember, of that sort of inward, sweet delight in God and divine things, that I have lived much in since, was on reading these words, I Tim. i. 17. *Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever, Amen.* As I read the words, there came into my soul, and was as it were diffused through it, a sense of the glory of a divine Being; a new sense, quite different from anything I ever experienced before. Never any words of Scripture seemed to me as these words did. I thought with myself how beautiful a Being that was, and how happy I should be, if I might enjoy that God, and be rapt up to him in heaven, and be as it were swallowed up in him forever! I



kept saying, and as it were singing, over these words of scripture to myself.

In the *Personal Narrative* or *Narrative of His Conversion*, as the document written nearly twenty years after the event is variously called, he described at greater length the development within him of this mystical sense by which he came to see even in the thunderstorm the imminent presence and majesty of God. As this "sweet inward sense" grew within him, the virtue of holiness appeared to him bright, charming, and serene. The soul of a true Christian lost in God seemed like a white lily inclined toward the east to receive the sunlight of God's glory. This romantic or poetic mysticism of immediate religious insight, based not on external evidence or achieved by the rational principle, but the result of a mystic, intuitive, enraptured mood, is a projection of the Puritanic introspection of an earlier age, but also a departure from the rigorous method which had sought confirmation of religious conviction less in ecstatic vision than in literal reading of the Scripture. It is the chief thing that sets Edwards apart from seventeenth-century Puritanism; and it is to be borne in mind when trying to account for the strange dichotomies and seeming contradictions that trouble the student who tries to reconcile the diversities of Edwards' mental and spiritual development. For his personality was as subtly sensitive as sincerely honest, and it is necessary to follow the niceties of his metaphysical distinctions if one hopes to see anything more than jarring inconsistencies in his thoughtful and practical life.

By 1726, when he went to Northampton, he had developed his religious affections to a remarkable degree and was full of the mystical spirit of sweet inwardness. During the next year he married Sarah Pierrepont, the beautiful, sensitive daughter of James Pierrepont of New Haven, whom he had apostrophized four years earlier in a descriptive passage that remains a classic of American literature of adoration and etherealized love.

Upon the death of Stoddard in 1729, Edwards was in sole charge of one of the most important inland churches. Though limited in bodily energy and supplied with only a meager aid of books, he drove steadily ahead in his life of stern self-discipline and intense mental application, rising at four in the morning, devoting thirteen hours a day to his study, and finding simple but satisfying relaxation in solitary woodland walks, during which the thoughts that came to him were jotted down in a little booklet for future elaboration. He speedily built up a great reputation as a preacher. Naturally endowed with a

splendid address and pulpit presence, his undemonstrative but fervent intensity gave his preaching a singular power, so that contemporaries who heard him marveled at his ability to sway his auditors at will. A sermon on the Day of Judgment left so vivid and solemn an impression that it was expected, as soon as Mr. Edwards should close his sermon, "the Judge would descend and the final separation take place." On another occasion, while he was preaching to the usually listless and indifferent congregation at Enfield, an observer noticed that he had the people bowed down in agony and terror: "There was such a breathing of distress and weeping, that the preacher was obliged to speak to the people, and desire silence that he might be heard."

This fearful preaching was inspired by Edwards' philosophy of the importance of the religious affections in religion and by the sense of mystical dependence upon God as he outlined these doctrines in his treatise of 1731 entitled *God Glorified in the Work of Redemption by the Greatness of Man's Dependence upon Him in the Whole of It* and in *A Divine and Supernatural Light, Immediately Imparted to the Soul by the Spirit of God, Shown to be both a Scriptural, and Rational Doctrine* (1734). His preaching, in turn, inspired a spontaneous revival of the religious spirit among the younger people of his congregation during 1734. It soon affected the whole community. Religion and what was becoming known as "getting religion" became all-absorbing topics of interest and common conversation. Experience of a terrible conviction of unworthiness and sinfulness, a resignation to God's justice in damning sinners to eternal perdition, followed by the delightful assurance of salvation through surrender of the sinner to Christ—these were the three rapid steps by which the abrupt transition from a state of sin to one of grace was made. This was called "conversion," and sermons like Edwards' famous and fearful *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God* (1741) were calculated to induce it, to the accompaniment of visions, trances, weeping, and convulsions. "Small wonder," said the Reverend Charles Chauncey of the First Church of Boston, where religion was more staid, and where such "goings-on" were discountenanced, "that under such preaching there was 'swooning away and falling to the Ground . . . bitter Shriekings and Screechings; Convulsion-like Tremblings and Agitations, Strugglings and Tumbings.'"

While Edwards himself apparently never sought to inspire the type of religious excess and orgy that accompanied the efforts of other revivalists in remoter regions, he stoutly defended the principle of awaken-

ing the religious affections by stirring the emotions, and published, as early as 1737, *A Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Work of God in the Conversion of Many Hundred Souls in Northampton, and the Neighboring Towns and Villages* and other works of a similar nature accurately descriptive of the manifestations and warmly commendatory of the methods of revivalism. The most notable of these publications, as presenting his fundamental views on the questions involved, is a sermon preached during 1742-3 and published in 1746 as *A Treatise Concerning Religious Affections*.

The movement, begun in Edwards' parish, spread rapidly through a series of revivals until it culminated in the Great Awakening of 1740 under the auspices of the Wesleys and George Whitefield. By that time German pietism as represented by men like Spener and Count Zinzendorf of the Moravian communities had joined forces with English Methodism, and the evangelical movement spread rapidly through the peripatetic journeyings of Whitefield and the Wesleys, who found the colonial frontier environment admirably adapted to its reception. It was not long before it swept from Massachusetts through Connecticut, New Jersey, and into Pennsylvania, whence the pietistic German sects of Pennsylvania, fanning out through the Shenandoah Valley, carried it southward to meet Moravian pietism moving northward from Georgia. The powerful preaching of the Presbyterian Samuel Davies carried it into the Virginia back country, so that by 1800 the wave of religious sentiment, now reinforced by the evangelistic movement among the Baptists, crossed the Appalachians and overran the frontier into Kentucky and Tennessee.

While the Great Awakening produced no great literature, its indirect influence on American literature was enormous. It induced, as the original Puritan impulse alone could never have induced, that strain of moral didacticism which aggressive fundamentalism demanded of nineteenth-century American writers. It retarded the development of the drama and insisted upon wholesome moral lessons in the novel when it permitted the novel at all. It chastened and subdued the romantic literary impulses that found their way from Europe to America, accepting the moral idealism of romanticism but banning its moral anarchism. These restrictions proved to be no unmitigated losses, for under them American literature gained in restraint, idealism, and moral decency what it lost in freedom of expression and variety of subject. Often, however, it hardened into the kind of "stiff-necked village piety" of the nineteenth century that

provoked Mark Twain to write *The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg*, and in the twentieth brought on the kind of fundamentalism that lies at the bottom of the Scopes trial in Dayton, Tennessee. It inspired Sinclair Lewis' *Main Street* no less than his *Elmer Gantry*, which, as Professor Walter F. Taylor has observed, only "mirrors the obverse side of a religious movement whose first literary result was Edwards' *Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Work of God*."

So much for one of the more enduring effects of Edwards and the Great Awakening. More immediately, Jonathan Edwards' revival of emotional religion produced dire results in Northampton. Religion swallowed in large gulps did not always stay down, and Edwards soon had cause to reflect dolefully that the religious emotions which he evoked so handily had a way of wearing off as rapidly: the "supernatural sense" or "inward principle" which conversion was supposed to inspire were often evanescent, like the "enthusiastic delusions of an over-heated imagination." He admonished his back-sliding parishioners and imposed penalties and burdens, against which they rebelled; and when, in his efforts to enforce godliness, he ruled that only the definitely and demonstrably converted would be admitted to the Lord's Supper, a large part of his congregation deserted him. Other quarrels—religious, civic, and social—followed; and by 1750, those who remained were sufficiently disaffected to charge him with attempting to reinstate a theocratic government over them, and to dismiss him from the church over which he had presided for a quarter of a century. Arrived at the height of his spiritual and intellectual powers, he must nevertheless have presented a pathetic figure on July 1, 1750, as he stood before the people whom he had guided for so long to deliver his *Farewell Sermon*, for he knew that the immediate future for himself and his large family would be anything but bright. During the next year he was compelled to move into the wilderness settlement of Stockbridge as missionary to the Indians and as pastor to a small group of whites.

While his removal thither brought on many hardships, it afforded him leisure to return to a project which he had first conceived in 1741, but which the Awakening and the ensuing difficulties at Northampton had sidetracked. Whether the emotional upheaval of the Great Awakening had any direct bearing upon Edwards' decision to turn to a more fundamental examination of man's relation to his God is problematical, but it is noteworthy that the issues of the Arminian controversy occupied his mind increasingly from 1740 onward, until 1752, when he

became wholly absorbed in the question of the determined *versus* the free will. Unless the doctrine of necessity could be established, he admitted, "it is, to me, beyond doubt, that the friends of those great gospel truths [i.e., the Calvinists] will but poorly maintain their controversy with the adversaries of those truths [i.e., the Arminians]. They will be obliged often to dodge, shuffle, hide, and turn their backs: and the latter will have a strong fort, from whence they never can be driven, and weapons to use, which those whom they oppose will find no shield to screen themselves from; and they will always puzzle, confound, and keep under the friends of sound doctrine, and glory and vaunt themselves in their advantage over them; and carry their affairs with a high hand, as they have done already for a long time past." Ready to admit that if the opposition could prove the will to be free, the Calvinist position would be utterly lost, he devoted his full energies to the establishment of the doctrine of necessity, calling it "one of the most important truths of moral philosophy that can ever be discussed, and most necessary to be known."

His contribution to this high philosophical problem appeared in 1754 as *A Careful and Strict Enquiry into the Modern Prevailing Notions of that Freedom of Will which is supposed to be Essential to Moral Agency, Virtue and Vice, Reward and Punishment, Praise and Blame*. In this book he is not content merely to establish the sovereignty of God according to the time-hallowed practice of the Calvinists, i.e., by referring the matter to the proofs of Scripture; but he chose to meet the opponents on their own ground and with their own weapons by proving it on the bases of logic and metaphysics. His rigorously reasoned book falls naturally into two parts: the first containing his positive argument for the principle of necessity, together with his definitions of the terms "liberty" and "freedom," and the second, his answers to the objections raised by the Arminians. Both rest upon one fundamental postulate: "I assert that nothing ever comes to pass without a Cause," and the corollaries (1) that it is the strongest motive that moves the will, and (2) that man is always moved in the direction of what seems to him most agreeable. Careful to exclude any notion of independent activity on the part of the will, he considered the will as purely passive. That is, the will is always of necessity drawn in the direction of the greatest apparent good, which is to say that the actions of the will are necessarily determined by something outside itself. Thus the will itself appeared to have no *freedom*, while man still retained *liberty*; for *liberty* he defined as "the

power, opportunity, or advantage that any one has to do as he pleases, or conducting in any respect, according to his pleasure, without considering how his pleasure comes to be as it is." The question, as Edwards sees it, is: Can a man do what he wills? Not, Can he will as he wills? As long as man is able to do what he chooses, he is free, although he may not be able to choose his choices. Having defined liberty as the ability of man to do as he wills, Edwards went on to assert that no higher liberty than this could be conceived, but this liberty did not presuppose that man's will is able to modify the desire or choice that, in the first instance, determined the will. Thus Edwards does not so much deny the freedom of the will as define it in such a way as to limit it to the power of acting solely upon impulses from outside itself, in the generation of which the mind, or will, is wholly passive.

In the second part of his treatise he took up the objections of the opposition to the doctrine of necessity, disposing of them one by one by bringing them to their *reductio ad absurdum*, at the same time that he traced back, through the labyrinth of causation, all effects to an all-inclusive, all-enduring First Cause, which itself is uncaused, and hence superhuman, or supernatural, or from God, since in the purely human realm an uncaused effect is inconceivable.

While thus arguing quite logically from his original assumptions, Edwards succeeded in proving to his satisfaction the central doctrine of his faith—the absolute dependence of man on the absolute sovereignty of God. His book remains the most original contribution of colonial America to philosophic thought. But Edwards did not succeed in saying the last word on the subject and settling the matter for all time, for the perennial philosophic controversy regarding free will and determinism still goes on among theorists with some slight shifts in the grounds and methods of debate.

By the irony of fate Edwards' championship of revivalism and his insistence on "conversion" as the sole ground of salvation supplied the final blow to destroy the theocratic system that he later labored to uphold. And in this later effort, beginning with *The Freedom of the Will*, to restore Puritanism to its pristine glory, the rigor of his systematic philosophical writing served only to expose in stark and naked relief the humanly intolerable grotesqueries of the Calvinistic dogma, in a way effectively and finally to doom it.

Edwards' crowning work on the freedom of the will failed to achieve the high purpose for which he designed it. It brought the theoretical philosopher very little nearer the solution of his problem; while

the ordinary man commonly contents himself with Dr. Samuel Johnson's dictum about the free will when he observed that "all theory is against it, all experience for it." Or he may take the position of Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes, who observed (possibly with Edwards' logical argument in mind) at the end of his poem on "The Wonderful One-Hoss Shay," which was built to outlast eternity, only to collapse—

All at once, and nothing first,—  
Just as bubbles do when they burst.  
  
End of the wonderful one-hoss shay.  
Logic is logic. That's all I say.

After *The Freedom of the Will*, Edwards produced several more important treatises: (1) *The Nature of True Virtue*, (2) *Concerning the End for which God Created the World* (both written in 1755 but first published posthumously as *Two Dissertations* in 1765), and (3) *The Great Christian Doctrine of Original Sin Defended* (1758), thus rounding out and unifying his system.

Readers of Edwards often encounter difficulties trying to reconcile his earlier transcendental tendencies as expressed in the *Personal Narrative* and *The Treatise Concerning Religious Affections* with his later Calvinistic position as promulgated in *The Freedom of the Will* and *The Great Christian Doctrine of Original Sin Defended*. The *Personal Narrative*, for example, abounds in moods of exalted rapture during which the virtue of holiness appeared to him as bright, charming, and serene; religion was a joyful experience, and the things of the spirit were "immensely and most exquisitely beautiful." Edwards, almost alone among Puritan theologians, succeeded in transmuting religious experience into forms of lofty and enduring beauty; and the *Personal Narrative* is excellent even when judged by the aesthetic standards of pure literature. Though his words are sometimes incapable of carrying the burden of his ecstatic vision, he nevertheless possessed, as Professor Walter F. Taylor says, "the romantic gift of suggesting far reaches and overtones of experience that words, by their very nature, cannot fully convey," and his mysticism appeals to human traits that are immemorial and enduring. "No religious autobiography in English," concludes Professor Taylor, "is so rich in poetry as the *Personal Narrative*."

To the younger Edwards, feeling his way along the path of mysticism and transcendentalism, rediscovering the doctrine of the inner life, the subjection of will to the natural desires of man was not a fearful and horrible thing; for they had led, in his case at least, to that sweet inwardness of affection that found

extreme pleasure in "taking a trembling walk with God." And the first flush of his tremendous success as an evangelist, when hundreds professed themselves "converted" to God by his excitation within them of the religious emotions, supplied him with confirmatory faith in the efficacy of the affections. However, subsequent events, attended by the growing responsibilities and severe trials of life that he experienced and the sobered reflections of maturity, led him to re-examine the psychological bases of his thinking and eventually to doubt whether the emotional man were quite worthy of implicit trust. And as he questioned his earlier faith in the free exercise of the affections, he placed greater emphasis on rational restraint. There was no complete change of front, but a shift of emphasis from faith in the heart to a trust of the head.

This very complex development of his mind, too involved to be stated here, is treated excellently in the Introduction by Professors Clarence H. Faust and Thomas H. Johnson to their book of *Selections from Jonathan Edwards* (New York, 1935). It is indicated summarily by their comments on the complex of ideas that welled up in New England under the guise of humanitarianism during Edwards' younger years. Humanitarians emphasized "the belief that man in the savage or 'natural' state is a better creature than when he is educated. Under theocracy sound learning was assumed the root of true religion, but for the humanitarians too much learning was a dangerous thing; for them the inner light needed not training but release, that the splendor might escape."

These doctrines, taught later in various forms by Rousseau and the French Revolutionists, had earlier found expression in the philosophy of the deists and the Quakers, and indeed by such leaders as John Wesley and George Whitefield—itinerant exhorters whose stress upon their faith that conversion, or the conviction that a "new light" had shone upon them, gave rise to a tide of revival meetings which Edwards supported.

Incompatible as these philosophies are, we see Edwards trying to reconcile them as their vectors cut through his career, and the tragedy that overtook him may be perceived more clearly if the student watches their intersections without losing sight of their direction. It is in moments when Edwards attempted to bring his theocratic and humanitarian principles together, when he sought to establish in logical relationship the intellectual love of God with human emotions, that his mysticism is most evident—as, for example, in the *Treatise concerning Religious Affections*. The tragedy inherent in the *Farewell Sermon* is that Edwards's earlier support of emotional relief, his devotion to 'New Lightism,' had been lessons too well learned by his congregation. His effort to re-assert theocratic government came tardily, and the casuistry to which he resorted in an

attempt to reconcile the eternal antinomies passed over the heads of his pastoral children. Thus he was compelled to abandon his pulpit.

Jonathan Edwards never abandoned his fundamentally psychological approach to the problems of theology and philosophy, as first outlined in the *Treatise Concerning Religious Affections*, or changed his terminology, or admitted that he had been wrong in his defense of the Great Awakening; but after that upheaval he was impelled, by natural causes, to fight henceforth for the logical and rational re-establishment of Calvinism in terms of determinism, depravity, and election.

Edwards' position in the history of American literature rests not merely on the cogency of his logic or the systematic structure of his philosophy. He is a

man of letters in his own right and in the full meaning of the terms. Following his thought, especially in his more technical works, is often hard work; but it is so because his matter, not his manner, occasions the difficulty. His style does not get in the way of his ideas, as does that of Cotton Mather. His manner of writing is direct and precise, dignified but clear. Often he is graphic in his representations, and not infrequently his sentences are illuminated by telling figurativeness, though never remotely resembling the pedantic allusiveness or fantastic imagery of Cotton Mather. He is notably free from clichés and jargon. His style becomes the perfect medium of the quiet, unostentatious ebb and flow of his serious and profound thought in a manner to make him a great artist and a master of English prose writing.

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### *The Flying Spider*<sup>1</sup>

*May it please your Honour,*

There are some things that I have happily seen of the wondrous way of the working of the spider.

<sup>1</sup> This remarkable letter was sent by Edwards' father to a European correspondent with whom the elder Edwards was in the habit of exchanging "intelligences." Written in 1715, when

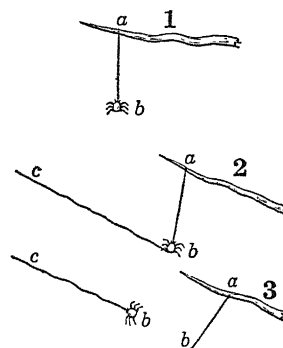
Although every thing belonging to this insect is admirable, there are some phenomena relating to them more particularly wonderful. Everybody that is

the young Edwards was only eleven, it is "a precocious exhibition of detailed and accurate observation, with a startling mixture of childlike naïveté and mature analysis."

used to the country, knows their marching in the air from one tree to another, sometimes at the distance of five or six rods. Nor can one go out in a dewy morning, at the latter end of August and the beginning of September, but he shall see multitudes of webs, made visible by the dew that hangs on them, reaching from one tree, branch and shrub, to another; which webs are commonly thought to be made in the night, because they appear only in the morning; whereas none of them are made in the night, for these spiders never come out in the night when it is dark, as the dew is then falling. But these webs may be seen well enough in the day time by an observing eye, by their reflection in the sunbeams. Especially late in the afternoon, may these webs, that are between the eye and that part of the horizon that is under the sun, be seen very plainly, being advantageously posited to reflect the rays. And the spiders themselves may be very often seen travelling in the air, from one stage to another amongst the trees, in a very unaccountable manner. But I have often seen that, which is much more astonishing. In very calm and serene days in the fore-mentioned time of year, standing at some distance behind the end of an house or some other opake body, so as just to hide the disk of the sun and keep off his dazzling rays, and looking along close by the side of it, I have seen a vast multitude of little shining webs, and glistening strings, brightly reflecting the sunbeams, and some of them of great length, and of such a height, that one would think they were tacked to the vault of the heavens, and would be burnt like tow in the sun, and make a very beautiful, pleasing, as well as surprising appearance. It is wonderful at what a distance, these webs may plainly be seen. Some that are at a great distance appear (it cannot be less than) several thousand times as big as they ought. I believe they appear under as great an angle, as a body of a foot diameter ought to do at such a distance; so greatly doth brightness increase the apparent bigness of bodies at a distance, as is observed of the fixed stars.

But that which is most astonishing, is, that very often appears at the end of these webs, spiders sailing in the air with them; which I have often beheld with wonderment and pleasure, and showed to others. And since I have seen these things, I have been very conversant with spiders; resolving if possible, to find out the mysteries of these their astonishing works. And I have been so happy as very frequently to see their

manner of working; that when a spider would go from one tree to another, or would fly in the air, he first lets himself down a little way from the twig he stands on by a web, as in Fig. 1; and then, laying hold of it



by his fore feet, and bearing himself by that, puts out a web, as in Fig. 2, which is drawn out of his tail with infinite ease, in the gently moving air, to what length the spider pleases; and if the farther end happens to catch by a shrub or the branch of a tree, the spider immediately feels it, and fixes the hither end of it to the web by which he let himself down, and goes over by that web which he put out of his tail as in Fig. 3. And this, my eyes have innumerable times made me sure of.

Now, Sir, it is certain that these webs, when they first proceed from the spider, are so rare a substance, that they are lighter than the air, because they will ascend in it, as they will immediately in a calm air, and never descend except driven by a wind; wherefore 'tis certain. And 'tis as certain, that what swims and ascends in the air is lighter than the air, as that what ascends and swims in water is lighter than water. So that if we should suppose any such time, wherein the air is perfectly calm, this web is so easily drawn out of the spider's tail, that if the end of it be once out, barely the levity of it is sufficient to draw it out to any length; wherefore if it don't happen that the end of this web, *b c*, catches by a tree or some other body, 'till there is so long a web drawn out, that its levity shall be so great as more than to counterbalance the gravity of the spider, or so that the web and the spider, taken together, shall be lighter than such a quantity of air as takes up equal space, then according to the universally acknowledged laws of nature, the web and the spider together will ascend, and not descend, in the air: as when a man

is at the bottom of the water, if he has hold of a piece of timber so great, that the wood's tendency upwards is greater than the man's tendency downwards, he together with the wood will ascend to the surface of the water. And therefore, when the spider perceives that the web *b c* is long enough to bear him up by its ascending force, he lets go his hold of the web *a b*, Fig. 3, and ascends in the air with the web *b c*. If there be not web more than enough, just to counterbalance the gravity of the spider, the spider together with the web will hang in equilibrio, neither ascending nor descending, otherwise than as the air moves. But if there is so much web, that its greater levity shall more than equal the greater density of the spider, they will ascend till the air is so thin, that the spider and web together are just of an equal weight with so much air. And in this way, Sir, I have multitudes of times seen spiders mount away into the air, from a stick in my hands, with a vast train of this silver web before them; for, if the spider be disturbed upon the stick by shaking of it, he will presently in this manner leave it. And their way of working may very distinctly be seen, if they are held up in the sun, or against a dark door, or any thing that is black.

Now, Sir, the only remaining difficulty is, how they first put out the end of the web *b c*, Fig. 3, out of their tails. If once the web is out, it is easy to conceive how the levity of it, together with the motion of the air, may draw it out to a great length. But how should they first let out of their tails, the end of so fine and even a string; seeing that the web, while it is in the spider, is a certain cloudy liquor, with which that great bottle tail of theirs is filled; which immediately, upon its being exposed to the air, turns to a dry substance, and exceedingly rarifies and extends itself. Now if it be a liquor, it is hard to conceive how they should let out a fine even thread, without expelling a little drop at the end of it; but none such can be discerned. But there is no need of this; for it is only separating that part of the web *b c*, Fig. 2, from *a b*, and the end of the web is already out. Indeed, Sir, I never could distinctly see them do this: so small a piece of web being imperceptible among the spider's legs. But I cannot doubt but that it is so, because there is a necessity that they should some way or other separate the web *a b*, Fig. 3, from their tails, before they can let out the web *b c*. And then I know they do have ways of dividing their webs by biting

them off, or in some other way. Otherwise they could not separate themselves from the web *a b*, Fig. 3.

And this, Sir, is the way of spiders going from one tree to another, at a great distance; and this is the way of their flying in the air. And, although I say I am certain of it, I don't desire that the truth of it should be received upon my word; though I could bring others to testify to it, to whom I have shown it, and who have looked on, with admiration, to see their manner of working. But every one's eyes, that will take the pains to observe, will make them as sure of it. Only those, that would make experiment, must take notice that it is not every sort of spider that is a flying spider, for those spiders that keep in houses are a quite different sort, as also those that keep in the ground, and those that keep in swamps, in hollow trees, and rotten logs; but those spiders, that keep on branches of trees and shrubs, are the flying spiders. They delight most in walnut trees, and are that sort of spiders that make those curious network polygonal webs, that are so frequently to be seen in the latter end of the year. There are more of this sort of spiders by far than of any other.

But yet, Sir, I am assured that the chief end of this faculty, that is given them, is not their recreation, but their destruction; because their destruction is unavoidably the effect of it; and we shall find nothing, that is the continual effect of nature, but what is of the means by which it is brought to pass. But it is impossible, but that the greatest part of the spiders upon the land should, every year, be swept into the ocean. For these spiders never fly, except the weather is fair and the atmosphere dry; but the atmosphere is never clear, neither in this nor any other continent, only when the wind blows from the midland parts, and consequently towards the sea. As here in New-England, the fair weather is only when the wind is westerly, the land being on that side, and the ocean on the easterly. And I never have seen any of these spiders flying, but when they have been hastening directly towards the sea. And the time of their flying being so long, even from about the middle of August every sunshiny day, until about the end of October; (though their chief time, as I observed before, is the latter end of August, and beginning of September;) and they never flying from the sea, but always towards it; must needs get there at last; for it's unreasonable to suppose that they have sense enough



to stop themselves when they come near the sea; for then they would have hundreds of times as many spiders upon the sea-shore, as any where else.

The same also holds true of other sorts of flying insects; for at these times, that I have viewed the spiders with their webs in the air, there has also appeared vast multitudes of flies, and all flying the same way with the spiders and webs directly to the ocean; and even such as butterflies, millers and moths, which keep in the grass at this time of year, I have <sup>10</sup> seen vastly higher than the tops of the highest trees, all going the same way. These I have seen towards evening, without such a screen to defend my eyes from the sunbeams; which I used to think were seeking a warmer climate.

The reason of their flying at that time of year, I take to be because then the ground and trees, the

places of their residence in summer, begin to be chilly and uncomfortable. Therefore when the sun shines pretty warm they leave them, and mount up in the air, and expand their wings to the sun, and flying for nothing but their own ease and comfort, they suffer themselves to go that way, that they find they can go with the greatest ease, and so where the wind pleases; and it being warmth they fly for, they find it cold and laborious flying against the wind. They therefore seem to use their wings, but just so much as to bear them up, and suffer them to go with the wind. So that without doubt almost all aerial insects, and also spiders which live upon trees and are made up of them, are at the end of the year swept away into the sea, and buried in the ocean, and leave nothing behind them but their eggs, for a new stock the next year.

### *The Soul* <sup>2</sup>

I am informed y<sup>t</sup> you have advan[c]ed a notion y<sup>t</sup> the Soul is matereal & keeps w<sup>th</sup> y<sup>e</sup> body till y<sup>e</sup> resurrection as I am a profes't Lover of Novelty you <sup>20</sup> must allow me to be much entertain'd by this discovery w<sup>ch</sup> however old in some part of y<sup>e</sup> world is new in this

I am informed y<sup>t</sup> you have advanced an Notion y<sup>t</sup> the Soul is materiall & attends y<sup>e</sup> body till y<sup>e</sup> resurrection as I am a profest Lover of novelty you must imagin I am very much entertained by this discovery (w<sup>ch</sup> however in some parts of y<sup>e</sup> world is new to us) but suffer my Curiosity a Littel further I w<sup>d</sup> know y<sup>e</sup> manner of y<sup>e</sup> kingdom before I swear allegiance <sup>30</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> I w<sup>d</sup> know whether this materiall Soul keeps w<sup>th</sup> in y<sup>e</sup> Coffin and if so whether it might not be convenient to build a repository for it in order to w<sup>ch</sup> I w<sup>d</sup> know w<sup>t</sup> Shape it is of whether round triangular or fore square or whethe is it a number of Long fine strings reaching from y<sup>e</sup> head to y<sup>e</sup> foot and whether it dus not Live a very discontented Life I am afraid when y<sup>e</sup> Coffin Gives way y<sup>e</sup> earth will fall in and

Crush it but if it should Chuse to Live above Ground and hover about y<sup>e</sup> Grave how big it is whether it <sup>40</sup> Covers all y<sup>e</sup> body or is assined to y<sup>e</sup> head or breast or how if it Covers all y<sup>e</sup> body w<sup>t</sup> it dus when another body is Laid upon y<sup>t</sup> whether y<sup>e</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> First Gives way and if so where is y<sup>e</sup> place of retreat but suppose y<sup>e</sup> Souls are not so big but y<sup>t</sup> 10 or a dozen of you may be about one body whether yy will not Quarrel for y<sup>e</sup> highest place and as I insist much upon my honnour and property I w<sup>d</sup> know wher I must Quit my dear head if a Superior Soul Comes in y<sup>e</sup> way but above all I am Conscarned to know w<sup>t</sup> they do where <sup>30</sup> a burcing Place has bin filled 20 30 or 100 times if they are a top of one another y<sup>e</sup> uppermost will be so far of y<sup>t</sup> it Can take no Care of y<sup>e</sup> body I strongly suspect they must march off[f] every time there Comes anew Set I hope ther is some Good place provided for them but dupt [d(o)ubt?] y<sup>e</sup> undergoing so much hard Ship & being deprived of y<sup>e</sup> body at Last will make them ill temper'd I Live it<sup>wth</sup> your phisicall Genus to determin whether some medesinall applications might not be proper in such Cases and <sup>40</sup> subscrib your prosclite when I can have solution of these maters

<sup>2</sup> This letter, written about the same time as the essay on the spider, or shortly thereafter, is peculiarly compounded of <sup>40</sup> philosophical sagacity and good-natured raillery.



*Of Being*<sup>3</sup>

That there should absolutely be nothing at all is utterly impossible, the Mind Can never Let it stretch its Conceptions ever so much bring it self to Conceive of a state of Perfect nothing, it puts the mind into mere Convulsion and Confusion to endeavour to think of such a state, and it Contradicts the very nature of the soul to think that it should be, and it is the Greatest Contradiction and the Aggregate of all Contradictions to say that there should not be, tis true we Cant so Distinctly show the Contradiction<sup>10</sup> by words because we Cannot talk about it without Speaking horrid Nonsense and Contradicting our selve at every word, and because nothing is that whereby we Distinctly show other particular Contradictions, but here we are Run up to Our first principle and have no other to explain the Nothingness or not being of nothing by, indeed we Can mean nothing else by nothing but a state of Absolute Contradiction; and If any man thinks that he Can think well Enough how there should be nothing I'll Engage<sup>20</sup> that what he means by nothing is as much something as any thing that ever He thought of in his Life, and I believe that if he knew what nothing was it would be intuitively Evident to him that it could not be. So that we see it is necessary some being should Eternally be and tis a more palpable Contradiction still to say that there must be being somewhere and not elsewhere for the words absolute nothing, and where, Contradict each other; and besides it Gives as great a shock to the mind to think of pure nothing<sup>30</sup> being in any one place, as it Does to think of it in all and it is self evident that there Can be nothing

in one place as well as in another and so if there Can be in one there Can be in all. So that we see this necessary eternall being must be infinite and Omnipresent. . . .

A state of Absolute nothing is a state of Absolute Contradiction absolute nothing is the Aggregate of all the Absurd[?] contradictions in the World, a state wherein there is neither body nor spirit, nor space neither empty space nor full space neither little nor Great, narrow nor broad neither infinitely Great space, nor finite space, nor a mathematical point neither Up nor Down neither north nor south (I dont mean as it is with Respect to the body of the earth or some other Great body but no Contrary Point, nor Positions or Directions[]) no such thing as either here Or there this way or that way or only one way; When we Go About to form an idea of Perfect nothing we must shut Out all these things we must shut out of our minds both space that has something in it and space that has nothing in it we must not allow our selves to think of the least part of space never so small, nor must we suffer our thoughts to take sanctuary in a mathematical point, when we Go to Expell body out of Our thoughts we must Cease not to leave empty space in the Room of it and when we Go to Expell emptiness from Our thoughts we must not think to squeeze it out by any thing Close hard and solid but we must think of the same that the sleeping Rocks Dream of and not till then shall we Get a Compleat idea of nothing . . .

*Notes on the Mind*<sup>4</sup>

EXISTENCE. If we had only the sense of Seeing, we should not be as ready to conclude the visible world to have been an existence independent of perception, as we do; because the ideas we have by the sense of Feeling, are as much mere ideas, as those we have by the sense of Seeing. But we know, that the things that are objects of this sense, all that the mind views

by Seeing, are merely mental Existences; because all these things, with all their modes, do exist in a looking-glass, where all will acknowledge, they exist only mentally.

It is now agreed upon by every knowing philosopher, that Colours are not really in the things, no more than Pain is in a needle; but strictly no where

<sup>3</sup> These passages from Edwards' youthful efforts to speculate on the subject of Being date to about the same time as the preceding selection.

<sup>4</sup> These speculations form a part of Edwards' "Notes on the Mind," which he wrote down during his collegiate career at Yale, 1716-20.

else but in the mind. But yet I think that Colour may have an existence out of the mind, with equal reason as any thing in Body has any existence out of the mind, beside the very substance of the body itself, which is nothing but the Divine power, or rather the Constant Exertion of it. For what else is that, which we call by the name of Body? I find Colour has the chief share in it. 'Tis nothing but Colour, and Figure, which is the termination of this Colour, together with some powers, such as the power of resisting, and motion, &c. that wholly makes up what we call Body. And if that, which we principally mean by the thing itself, cannot be said to be in the thing itself, I think nothing can be. If Colour exists not out of the mind, then nothing belonging to Body, exists out of the mind but Resistance, which is Solidity, and the termination of this Resistance, with its relations, which is Figure, and the communication of this Resistance, from space to space, which is Motion; though the latter are nothing but modes of the former. Therefore, there is nothing out of the mind but Resistance. And not that neither, when nothing is actually resisted. Then, there is nothing but the Power of Resistance. And as Resistance is nothing else but the actual exertion of God's power, so the Power can be nothing else, but the constant Law or Method of that actual exertion. And how is there any Resistance, except it be in some mind, in idea? What is it that is resisted? It is not Colour. And what else is it? It is ridiculous to say, that Resistance is resisted. That, does not tell us at all what is to be resisted. There must be something resisted before there can be Resistance; but to say Resistance is resisted, is ridiculously to suppose Resistance, before there is anything to be resisted. Let us suppose two globes only existing, and no mind. There is nothing there, *ex confesso*, but Resistance. That is, there is such a Law, that the space within the limits of a globular figure shall resist. Therefore, there is nothing there but a power, or an establishment. And if there be any Resistance really out of the mind, one power and establishment must resist another establishment and law of Resistance, which is exceedingly ridiculous. But yet it cannot be otherwise, if any way out of the mind. But now it is easy to conceive of Resistance, as a mode of an idea. It is easy to conceive of such a power, or constant manner of stopping or resisting a colour. The idea may be resisted, it may move, and stop and rebound; but how a mere power, which is nothing real, can move and stop, is inconceivable, and it is impossible to say a word about it without contradiction. The world is therefore an ideal one; and the Law of creating, and the succession of these ideas is constant and regular. . . .

### Diary

*Thursday forenoon, Oct. 4, 1723.* Have this day fixed and established it, that Christ Jesus has promised me faithfully, that, if I will do what is my duty, so and according to the best of my prudence in the matter, that my condition in this world, shall be better for me than any other condition whatever, and more to my welfare, to all eternity. And, therefore, whatever my condition shall be, I will esteem it to be such; and if I find need of faith in the matter, that I will confess it as impiety before God. . . .

*Thursday night, Dec. 12.* If, at any time, I am forced to tell others wherein I think they are somewhat to blame; in order to avoid the important evil so, that there shall be a probability of their taking it as the effect of little, fretting, angry emotions of mind.— . . . When I do want, or am likely to want, good books, to spend time in studying Mathematics, and in reviewing other kinds of old learning; to spend more time in visiting friends, in the more private duties of a pastor, in taking care of worldly business, in going abroad and other things that I may contrive.

*Friday morning, Dec. 27.* At the end of every month, to examine my behaviour, strictly, by some chapter in the New Testament, more especially made up of rules of life.—At the end of the year, to examine my behaviour by the rules of the New Testament in general, reading many chapters. It would also be convenient, some time at the end of the year, to read, for this purpose, in the book of Proverbs.

*Tuesday night, Dec. 31.* Concluded never to suffer, nor express, any angry emotions of mind, more or less, except the honour of God calls for it in zeal for him, or to preserve myself from being trampled on.

1724. *Wednesday, Jan. 1.* Not to spend too much time in thinking, even of important and necessary worldly business, and to allow every thing its proportion of thought, according to its urgency and importance. . . .

*Monday, Jan. 20.* I have been very much to blame, in that I have not been as full, and plain and downright, in my standing up for virtue and religion, when I have had fair occasion, before those who seemed to take no delight in such things. If such conversation would not be agreeable to them, I have in some degree minced the matter, that I might not displease, and might not speak right against the grain, more than I should have loved to have done with others, to whom it would be agreeable to speak directly for religion. I ought to be exceedingly bold with such persons, not talking in a melancholy strain, but in one confident and fearless, assured of the truth and excellence of the cause.

*Monday, Feb. 3.* Let every thing have the value now which it will have on a sick bed: and frequently, in my pursuits of whatever kind, let this question come into my mind, "How much shall I value this, on my death-bed?" . . .

*Thursday, Feb. 6.* More convinced than ever, of the usefulness of free, religious conversation. I find by conversing on Natural Philosophy, that I gain knowledge abundantly faster, and see the reasons of things much more clearly than in private study: wherefore, earnestly to seek, at all times, for religious conversation; for those, with whom I can, at all times, with profit and delight, and with freedom, so converse. . . .

#### AT YALE COLLEGE

*Saturday night, June 6.* This week has been a very remarkable week with me, with respect to despondencies, fears, perplexities, multitudes of cares, and distraction of mind: it being the week I came hither to New-Haven, in order to entrance upon the office of Tutor of the College. I have now, abundant reason to be convinced, of the troublesomeness and

vexation of the world, and that it never will be another kind of world.

*Tuesday, July 7.* When I am giving the relation of a thing, remember to abstain from altering either in the matter or manner of speaking, so much, as that, if every one, afterwards, should alter as much, it would at last come to be properly false. . . .

*Friday, Nov. 6.* Felt sensibly, somewhat of that trust and affiance, in Christ, and with delight committing of my soul to him, of which our divines used to speak, and about which, I have been somewhat in doubt.

*Tuesday, Nov. 10.* To mark all that I say in conversation, merely to beget in others, a good opinion of myself, and examine it.

*Sabbath, Nov. 15.* Determined, when I am indisposed to prayer, always to premeditate what to pray for; and that it is better, that the prayer should be of almost any shortness, than that my mind should be almost continually off from what I say. . . .

*Friday, May 28 [1725].* It seems to me, that whether I am now converted or not, I am so settled in the state I am in, that I shall go on in it all my life. But, however settled I may be, yet I will continue to pray to God, not to suffer me to be deceived about it, nor to sleep in an unsafe condition; and ever and anon, will call all into question and try myself, using for helps, some of our old divines, that God may have opportunities to answer my prayers, and the Spirit of God to show me my error, if I am in one. . . .

*May 18 [1735].* My mind at present is, never to suffer my thoughts and meditations, at all to ruminate.

*June 11.* To set apart days of meditation on particular subjects; as sometimes, to set apart a day for the consideration of the Greatness of my Sins; at another, to consider the Dreadfulness and Certainty, of the Future Misery of Ungodly men; at another, the Truth and Certainty of Religion; and so, of the Great Future Things promised and threatened in the Scriptures.

*Sarah Pierrepont*<sup>5</sup>

They say there is a young lady in [New Haven] who is beloved of that Great Being, who made and rules the world, and that there are certain seasons in which this Great Being, in some way or other invisible, comes to her and fills her mind with exceeding sweet delight, and that she hardly cares for any thing, except to meditate on him—that she expects after a while to be received up where he is, to be raised up out of the world and caught up into heaven; being assured that he loves her too well to let her remain at a distance from him always. There she is to dwell with him, and to be ravished with his love and delight forever. Therefore, if you present all the world before her, with the richest of its treasures, she disregards it and cares not for it, and is unmin-

ful of any pain or affliction. She has a strange sweetness in her mind, and singular purity in her affections; is most just and conscientious in all her conduct; and you could not persuade her to do any thing wrong or sinful, if you would give her all the world, lest she should offend this Great Being. She is of a wonderful sweetness, calmness and universal benevolence of mind; especially after this Great God has manifested himself to her mind. She will sometimes go about from place to place, singing sweetly; and seems to be always full of joy and pleasure; and no one knows for what. She loves to be alone, walking in the fields and groves, and seems to have some one invisible always conversing with her.

*Nature*<sup>6</sup>

We have shown that the Son of God created the world for this very end, to communicate Himself in an image of His own excellency. He communicates Himself properly only to spirits, and they only are capable of being proper images of His excellency, for they only are properly *beings*, as we have shown. Yet He communicates a sort of a shadow or glimpse of His excellencies to bodies which, as we have shown, are but the shadows of beings and not real beings. He who, by His immediate influence, gives being every moment, and by His spirit actuates the world, because He inclines to communicate Himself and His excellencies, doth doubtless communicate His excellency to bodies, as far as there is any consent or analogy. And the beauty of face and sweet airs in men are not always the effect of the corresponding excellencies of mind; yet the beauties of nature are really emanations or shadows of the excellency of the Son of God.

So that, when we are delighted with flowery meadows and gentle breezes of wind, we may consider that we see only the emanations of the sweet benevolence of Jesus Christ. When we behold the fragrant rose and lily, we see His love and purity.

So the green trees and fields, and singing of birds, are the emanations of His infinite joy and benignity. The easiness and naturalness of trees and vines are shadows of His beauty and loveliness. The crystal rivers and murmuring streams are the footsteps of His favor, grace, and beauty. When we behold the light and brightness of the sun, the golden edges of an evening cloud, or the beauteous bow, we behold the adumbrations of His glory and goodness; and in the blue sky, of his mildness and gentleness. There are also many things wherein we may behold His awful majesty: in the sun in his strength, in comets, in thunder, in the hovering thunder-clouds, in ragged rocks and the brows of mountains. That beauteous light with which the world is filled in a clear day is a lively shadow of His spotless holiness, and happiness and delight in communicating Himself. And doubtless this is a reason that Christ is compared so often to those things, and called by their names, as the Sun of Righteousness, the morning-star, the rose of Sharon, and lily of the valley, the apple-tree among trees of the wood, a bundle of myrrh, a roe, or a young hart. By this we may discover the beauty of many of those metaphors and similes which to an

<sup>5</sup> This tribute to Sarah Pierrepont was written in 1723, when Edwards was twenty, and Miss Pierrepont thirteen. They were married four years later.

<sup>6</sup> This undated fragment was found among Edwards' manuscripts.

In like manner, when we behold the beauty of man's body in its perfection, we still see like emanations of Christ's divine perfections, although they do not always flow from the mental excellencies of

the person that has them. But we see the most proper image of the beauty of Christ when we see beauty in the human soul.

### *Narrative of Surprising Conversions*<sup>7</sup>

My Letter to a Brother [the Reverend Benjamin Colman<sup>8</sup>] May 30. 35.

Dear Sir

In answer to your Desire, I here send you a Particular account of the Present Extraordinary circumstances of this Town, & the neighbouring Towns with Respect to Religion. I have observed that the Town for this several years have gradually been Reforming; There has appeared Less & Less of a party spirit, & a contentious disposition, which before had Prevail'd for many years between two Parties in the Town. The young People also have been Reforming more and more; They by degrees Left off their frolicking, and have been observably more decent in their attendance on the Publick worship. The winter before Last there appeared a strange flexibleness in the young People of the Town, and an unusual disposition to Harken to Counsel, on this Occasion; It had been their manner of a Long Time, & for Ought I know, always, to make sabbath day nights & Lecture days, to be Especially Times of diversion, & Company Keeping: I then Preach'd a sermon on the Sabbath before the Lecture, to show them the unsuitableness, & Inconvenience of the Practice, & to Perswade them to Reform it; & urged it on Heads of Families that It should be a thing agreed among them to Govern their Families, & keep them in at those times. & There happen'd to be at my house the Evening after, men that belonged to the several parts of the Town, to whom I moved that they should desire the Heads of Families, in my name, to meet together in their several neighbourhoods, that they might Know Each

others minds, and agree Every one to restrain his Family; which was done, & my motion Complied with throughout the Town; but the Parents found Little or no occasion for the Exercise of Government in the case; for the young People declared themselves convinced by what they had heard, and willing of themselves to Comply with the Counsel Given them; & I suppose it was almost universally complied with thenceforward. After this there began to be a Remarkable Religious Concern among some Farm Houses, at a Place Called Pascommuck, & five or six that I hoped were savingly wrought upon there. & in April there was a very sudden and awfull death of a young man in Town, in the very Bloom of his youth, who was violently seized with a Pleurisy & taken Immediately out of his head, and died in two days; which much affected many young People in the Town. This was followed with another death of a young married woman, who was in Great Distress in the Beginning of her Illness, but was hopefully Converted before her death; so that she died full of Comfort, and in a most Earnest & moving manner, warning & counselling others, which I believe much contributed to the solemnizing of the spirits of the young People in the Town; and there began Evidently to appear more of a Religious concern upon Peoples minds. In the Fall of the year I moved to the young People that they should set up Religious meetings, on Evenings after Lectures, which they complied with; this was followed with the death of an Elderly Person in the Town, which was attended with very unusual Circumstances, which much affected many People. about that Time began the Great noise that there was in this Part of the Country about Arminianism, which seemed strangely to be overruled for the Promoting of Religion; People seemed to be Put by it upon Enquiring, with concern & Engagedness of mind, what was the way of salvation, and what were the Terms of our acceptance with God; & what was said Publickly on that occasion; however found fault with by many Elsewhere, &

<sup>7</sup> This "narrative" is Edwards' own account of the Great Awakening in Northampton, where it seems to have been inspired by his preaching as early as 1734. The revival ran its course during the next fifteen years, eventually spreading all over the eastern seaboard from Maine to Georgia.

<sup>8</sup> This is the same Benjamin Colman who, as pastor of the Brattle Street Church from 1699 to his death in 1747, had caused the Mathers much concern. Edwards wrote his letter in answer to Colman's request for particulars concerning the revival at Northampton. Colman was so much impressed that he published the letter in 1736. The text here followed is from Edwards' own copy of the letter, now deposited in the Andover Theological Seminary.

Ridicul'd by some, was most Evidently attended with a very Remarkable blessing of Heaven, to the souls of the People in this Town, to the Giving of them an universal satisfaction & Engaging their minds with Respect to the thing in Question, the more Earnestly to seek salvation in the way, that had been made Evident to them; & then, a Concern about the Great things of Religion began, about the Latter End of Decem<sup>b</sup>er, & the beginning of January, to Prevail abundantly in the Town, till in a very Little Time it 10 became universal throughout the Town, among old and young, & from the highest to the Lowest; all seemed to be siezed with a deep concern about their Eternal salvation; all the Talk in all companics, & upon occasions was upon the things of Religion, and no other talk was anywhere Relished; & scarcely a single Person in the whole Town was Left unconcerned about the Great things of the Eternal World: Those that were wont to be the vainest, & Loosest Persons in Town seemed in General to be siezed with 20 strong convictions: Those that were most disposed to contemn vital & Experimental Religion, & those that had the Greatest Conceit of their own Reason: the highest Families in the Town, & the oldest Persons in the Town, and many Little Children were affected Remarkably; no one Family that I know of, & scarcely a Person has been Exempt & the Spirit of God went on in his saving Influences, to the appearance of all Human Reason & Charity, in a truly wonderfull and astonishing manner. The news of it filled 30 the neighbouring Towns with Talk, & there were many in them that scoffed and made a Ridicule of the Religion that appeared in Northampton; But it was observable that it was very frequent & Common that those of other Towns that came into this Town, & observed how it was here, were Greatly affected, and went home with wounded spirits, & were never more able to Shake off the Impression that it made upon them, till at Length there began to appear a General concern in several of the Towns in the 40 County: in the month of march the People in new Hadley seemed to be siezed with a deep concern about their salvation, all as it were at once, which has Continued in a very Great degree Ever since: about the same time there began to appear the Like Concern in the west Part of Suffield, which has since spread into all Parts of the Town. It next began to appear at Sunderland, & soon became universal, & to a very Great Degree, about the same Time it began

to appear in Part of Deerfield, Called Green River, & since has filled the Town. It began to appear also at a part of Hatfield, and after that the whole Town in the second week in April seemed to be siezed at once, & there is a Great & General concern there. and there Gradually Got in a Considerable degree of the same Concern into Hadley old society, & Mr Hopkins's Parish in Springfield, but it is nothing near so Great as in many other Places. the next Place that we heard of was Northfield, where the Concern was very Great & General. we have heard that there is a considerable degree of it at Longmeadow, & there is something of it in old Springfield in some parts of the society. about three weeks ago the Town of Enfield were struck down as it were at once, the worst Persons in the Town seemed to be suddenly siezed with a Great degree of Concern about their souls, as I have been informed: & about the same Time, Mr Bull of Westfield [said] that there began to be a Great alteration there, & that there had been more done in one week before that Time that I spoke with him than had been done in seven year before: the People of Westfield have till now above all other Places, made a scoff & derision of this concern at Northampton. There has been a Great Concern of a Like Nature at Windsor, on the westside of the River, which began about the same Time that it began to be General here at Northampton; & my Father has told me that there is an hopefull beginning on the East side in his society. Mr Noyes writes me word that there is a Considerable Revival of Religion at New-Haven; & I have been Credibly Informed that there is something of it at Guilford, and Lime, as there also is at Coventry, Bolton, & a society in Lebanon called the Crank: I yesterday saw Mr White of Bolton, and also Last night saw a young man that belongs to Coventry, who Gave a very Remarkable account of that Town, of the manner in which the Rude debauched young People there were suddenly 50 siezed with a concern about their souls.

as to the nature of Persons Experiences, & the Influences of that spirit that there is amongst us, Persons when siezed with concern are brought to forsake their vices, & ill Practices; the Looser sort are brought to forsake & to dread their former Extravagances: Persons are soon brought to have done with their old Quarrels; Contention & Intermeddling with other mens matters seems to be dead amongst us. I believe there never was so much done at Confessing

of faults to Each other, & making up differences, as there has Lately been: where this concern comes it Immediately Puts an End to differences between ministers & People: there was a considerable uneasiness at New Hadley between some of the People & their minister, but when this Concern came amongst them it Immediately Put an End to it, & the People are now universally united to their minister. There was an Exceeding alienation at Sunderland, between the minister & many of the People; but when this Concern came amongst them it all vanished at once, & the People are universally united, in hearty affection to their minister. There were some men at Deerfield, of Turbulent spirits, that kept up an uneasiness there with Mr ashley; but one of the Chief of them has Lately been Influenced, fully, & freely to confess his fault to him, & is become his hearty Friend.

People are brought off from Inordinate Engagedness after the World, & have been Ready to Run into the other Extreme of too much neglecting their worldly Business & to mind nothing but Religion. Those that are under Convictions are Put upon it Earnestly to Enquire what they shall do to be saved, & diligently to use appointed means of Grace, and apply themselves to all known duty. & those that obtain Hope themselves, & the Charity of others Concerning their Good Estate, Generally seem to be brought to A Great Sense of their own Exceeding misery in a natural Condition, & their utter helplessness, & Insufficiency for themselves, & their Exceeding wickedness & Guiltiness in the sight of God; it seldom fails but that Each one seems to think himself worse than any body Else, & they are brought to see that they deserue no mercy of God, that all their Prayers & Pains are Exceeding worthless & Polluted, & that God, notwithstanding all that they have done, or can do, may Justly Exccute his Eternal wrath upon them, & they seem to be brought to a Lively sense of the Excellency of Jesus Christ & his sufficiency & willingness to save sinners, & to be much weaned in their affections from the world, & to have their Hearts filled with Love to God and Christ, and a disposition to Lie in the dust before him. they seem to have Given them a Lively Conviction of the Truth of the Gospel, & the divine authority of the Holy Scriptures; tho they cant have the Excercise of this at all Times alike, nor Indeed of any other Grace. they seem to be brought to abhor themselves for the sins of their Past Life, & to Long to be holy, & to Live holily, & to Gods

Glory; but at the same time complain that they can do nothing, they are poor Impotent Creatures, utterly Insufficient to Glorify their Creatour & Redeemer. They Commonly seem to be much more sensible of their own wickedness after their Conversion then before, so that they are often Humbled by it, it seems to them that they are Really become more wicked, when at the same time they are Evidently full of a Gracious Spirit: Their Remaining sin seems to be their very Great Burthen, & many of them seem to Long after Heaven, that there they may be Rid of sin. They Generally seem to be united in dear Love, and affection one to another, & to have a Love to all mankind: I never saw the Christian spirit in Love to Enemies so Exemplified, in all my Life as I have seen it within this Half year. They commonly Express a Great Concern for others salvation; some say that they think they are far more Concern'd for others conversion, after they themselves have been Converted, than Ever they were for their own; several have thought (tho Perhaps they might be deceived in it) that they could freely die for the salvation of any soul, of the meanest of mankind, of any Indian in the woods. This Town never was so full of Love, nor so full of Joy, nor so full of distress as it has Lately been. Some Persons have had those Longing desires after Jesus Christ, that have been to that degree as to take away their strength, and very much to weaken them, & make them faint: many have been Even Overcome with a sencs of the dying Love of Christ, so that the home of the body has been Ready to fail under it; there was once three Pious young Persons in this Town talking together of the dying Love of Christ, till they all fainted away; tho tis Probable the fainting of the two Latter was much Promoted by the fainting of the first. many Express a sense of the Glory of the divine Perfections, & of the Excellency & fullness of Jesus Christ, & of their own Littleness & unworthiness, in a manner Truly wonderfull, & almost vnparalleld; & so likewise of the Excellency & wonderfullness of the way of Salvation by Jesus Christ. Their Esteem of the Holy Scriptures is Exceedingly Increased. Many of them say the Bible seems to be a new Book to them, as tho they never Read it before: There have been some Instances of Persons that by only an accidental sight of the Bible, have been as much moved, it seem'd to me, as a Lover by the sight of his sweet heart. The Preaching of the Word is Greatly Prized by them, they say they never heard

Preaching before; and so are Gods Sabbaths, & ordinances, & opportunities of Publick worship; the Sabbath is Longed for before it comes, some by only hearing the bell Ring on some occasion in the week time, have been Greatly moved, because it has Put them in mind of its Ringing to Call the People together to worship God. But no Part of Publick worship has commonly put an Effect on them as singing Gods Praises. They have a Greater Respect to ministers than they used to have, there is scarcely a minister Preaches here but Gets their Esteem & affection. The Experiences of some Persons Lately amongst [us] have been beyond almost all that Ever I heard or Read of. There is a Pious woman in this Town that is a very modest Bashfull Person, that was moved by what she heard of the Experiences of others Earnestly to seek to God to give her more clear manifestations of himself, and Evidences of her own Good Estate, & God answer'd her Request, and Gradually gave her more & more of a sense of his Glory & Love, which she had with Intermissions for several days, till one morning the week before Last she had it to a more than ordinary degree, and it Prevaild more & more till towards the middle of the day, till her nature began to sink vnder it, as she was alone in the House; but there came somebody into the House, & found her in an unusual, Extraordinary frame She Expressed what she saw & felt to him; it came to that at Last that they Raised the neighbours, they were afraid she would die; I went up to see her & found her Perfectly sober & in the Exer[c]ise of her Reason, but having her nature seemingly overborn & sinking, and when she could speak Expressing in a manner that cant be described the sense she had of the Glory of God, and Particularly of such & such Perfections, & her own vnworthiness, her Longing to Lie in the dust, sometimes her Longing to Go to be with Christ, & crying out of the Excellency of Christ, & the wonderfullness of his dying Love; & so she continued for Hours together tho not alwaies in the same degree; at sometimes she was able to discourse to those about her; but it seemed to me if God had manifested a Little more of himself to her she would Immediately have sunk & her frame dissolved under it. She has since been at my House, & continues as full as she can hold, but looks on her self not as an Eminent saint, but as the worst of all, & vnworthy to Go to speak with a minister; but yet now beyond any Great Doubt of her Good Estate. There are two Persons

that Belong to other Towns that have had such a sense of Gods Exceeding Greatness & majesty, that they were as it were swallowed up; they both of them told me to that Purpose that if they in the Time of it they had had the Least fear that they were not at Peace with that Great God, they should Immediately have died. But there is a very vast variety of degrees of spiritual discoveries, that are made to those that we hope are Godly. as there is also in the steps, & method of the spirits operation in convincing & converting sinners, and the Length of Time that Persons are under conviction before they have comfort. There is an alteration made in the Town in a few months that strangers can scarcely [be] conscious of; our Church I believe was the Largest in New England before, but Persons Lately have thronged in, so that there are very few adult Persons Left out. There have been a Great multitude hopefully converted, too many, I find, for me to declare abroad with Credit to my Judgment. the Town seems to be full of the Presence of God; our young People when they Get together instead of frolicking as they used to do are altogether on Pious subjects; tis so at weddings & on all occasions. The Children in this, & the neighbouring Towns have been Greatly affected & Influenced by the spirit of God, & many of them hopefully changed; the youngest in this Town is between 9. & 10 years of age, some of them seem to be full of Love to X.<sup>o</sup> & have Expressed Great Longings after him & willingness to die, & Leave Father & mother & all things in the world to Go to him, together with a Great sense of their unworthiness & admiration at the free Grace of God towards them. & there have been many old People, many above fifty & several near seventy that seem to be wonderfully changed & hopefully new born. the Good People that have been formerly Converted in the Town have many of them been wonderfully enliven'd & Increased. This work seems to be upon Every account an Extraordinary dispensation of Providence. Tis Extraordinary upon the account of [the] universality of it in affecting all sorts high & Low Rich & Poor wise & unwise old & young vicious & moral; tis very Extraordinary as to the numbers that are hopefully savingly wrought upon, & particularly the number of aged Persons & Children & Loose Livers; and also on the account of the Quickness of the work of the Spirit on them, for many seem to have been suddenly taken from a Loose

<sup>o</sup> Christ.



way of Living, & to be so changed as to become truly holy spiritual Heavenly Persons; tis Extraordinary as to the degrees of Gracious Communications, & the abundant measures in which the Spirit of God has been Poured out on many Persons; tis Extraordinary as to the Extent of it, Gods spirit being so Remarkably Poured out on so many Towns at once, & its making such swift Progress from Place to Place. The Extraordinariness of the thing has been I believe one Principal cause that People abroad have suspected it. 10 There have been as I have heard many odd & strange stories that have been carried about the Countrey of this affair, which it is a wonder some wise men should be so Ready to Believe. Some indeed vnder Great terrours of Conscience have had Impressions on their Imaginations; and also vnder the Power of the spiritual discoveries, they have had Livelily Impressed Ideas of Christ shedding blood for sinners, his blood Running from his veins, & of Christ in his Glory in Heaven & such Like things, but they are alwaies 20 taught, & have been several times taught in Publick not to Lay the weight of their hopes on such things & many have nothing of any such Imaginations. there have been several Persons that have had their natures overborn vnder strong Convictions, have trembled, & han't been able to stand, they have had such a sense of divine wrath; But there are no new doctrines Embraced, but People have been abundantly Established in those that we account orthodox; there is no new way of worship affected. there is no oddity of Beha- 30 viour Prevails; People are no more superstitious about their Clothes, or any thing Else than they used to be: Indeed there is a Great deal of talk when they are together of one anothers Experiences, & Indeed no other is to be expected in a Town where the Concern of the soul, is so vniversally the Concern & that to so Great a degree. & doubtless some Persons vnder the strength of Impressions that are made on their minds and vnder the Power of strong affections, are Guilty of Imprudences, their zeal may need to be Regulated 40 by more Prudence, & they may need a Guide to their assistancce; as of old when the Church of Corinth had the Extraordinary Gifts of the spirit, they needed to be told by the apostle that the spirit of the Prophets were subject to the Prophets, & that their Gifts were to be exercised with Prudence, because God was not the author of Confusion but of Peace. There is no unlovely oddity in Peoples Temper Prevailing with this work, but on the contrary the face of

things is much changed as to the appearance of a meek, humble, amiable behaviour. Indeed the devil has not been Idle, but his hand has Evidently appeared in several Instances Endavouring to mimick the work of the spirit of God and to cast a slur upon it & no wonder: & there has hereby appeared the need of the watchfull Eye of skillfull Guides, & of wisdom from above to direct them. There Lately Came up hither a Couple of ministers from Connecticut viz. Mr Lord of Preston, & Mr Owen of Groton, who had heard of the Extraordinary circumstances of this & the neighbouring Towns, who had heard the affair well Represented by some, & also had heard many Reports Greatly to its disadvantage, who came on purpose to see & satisfy themselves; & that they might thoroughly Acquaint themselves, went about, & spent Good Part of a day, in hearing the accounts of many of our new Converts, & Examining of them; which was Greatly to their satisfaction & they took Particular notice, among other things of the modesty with which Persons Gave account of themselves, & said that the one half was not told them, & could not be told them; & that if they Renounced these Persons Experiences they must Renounce Christianity it self. and Mr Owen said Particularly as to their Impressions on their Imaginations, they were quite different from what had been Represented, & that they were no more than might naturally be Expected in such cases.

Thus sir I have Given you a Particular account of this affair which satan has so much misrepresented in the Countrey. This is a true account of the matter as far as I have Opportunity to Know, & I suppose I am vnder Greater advantages to Know than any Person Living. Having been thus Long in the account, I forbear to make Reflections, or to Guess what God is about to do; I Leave this to you, and shall only say, as I desire alwaies to say from my Heart *To God be all the Glory whose work alone it is;* & Let him have an Interest in your Prayers, who so much needs divine help at that day, & is your affectionate Brother,

& Humble servant,

Northampton May 30. 1735. Jth Edwards.

Since I wrote the foregoing Letter, there has Happen'd a thing of a very awfull nature in the Town; My Uncle Hawley, the Last Sabbath day morning, Laid violent Hands on himself, & Put an End to his

Life, by Cutting his own throat. He had been for a Considerable Time greatly Concern'd about the Condition of his soul; till, by the ordering of a sovereign Providence he was suffered to fall into deep melancholly, a distemper that the Family are very Prone to; he was much overpowered by it; the devil took the advantage & drove him into despairing thoughts: he was Kept very much awake a nights, so that he had but very Little sleep for two months. till he seemed not to have his Faculties in his own Power: he was in a Great measure Past a Capacity of Receiving advice, or being Reason'd with. the Coroners Inquest Judged him delirious. Satan seems to be in a Great Rage, at this Extraordinary breaking forth of the work of God. I hope it is because he knows that he has but a short time: doubtless he had a Great Reach, in this violent attack of his against the whole affair. We have appointed a day of Fasting in the Town this week, by Reason of this & other appearances of satans Rage amongst us against Poor souls. I yesterday saw a woman that belongs to Durham, who says there is a Considerable Revival of Religion there.

I am yours &c—  
J. E.

Northampton June 3. 1735.

### *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God*<sup>10</sup>

Your wickedness makes you as it were heavy as lead, and to tend downwards with great weight and pressure towards hell; and if God should let you go, you would immediately sink and swiftly descend and plunge into the bottomless gulf, and your healthy constitution, and your own care and prudence, and best contrivance, and all your righteousness, would have no more influence to uphold you and keep you out of hell, than a spider's web would have to stop a fallen rock. Were it not for the sovereign pleasure of God, the earth would not bear you one moment; for you are a burden to it; the creation groans with you; the creature is made subject to the bondage of your corruption, not willingly; the sun does not willingly shine upon you to give you light to serve sin and Satan; the earth does not willingly yield her increase to satisfy your lusts; nor is it willingly a stage for your wickedness to be acted upon; the air does not willingly serve you for breath to maintain the flame of life in your vitals, while you spend your life in the service of God's enemies. God's creatures are good, and were made for men to serve God with, and do not willingly subserve to any other purpose, and groan when they are abused to purposes so directly contrary to their nature and end. And the world would spew you out, were it not for the sovereign hand of him who hath subjected it in hope. There are black clouds of God's wrath now hanging directly over your heads, full of the dreadful storm, and big with thunder; and were it not for the restraining hand of God, it would immediately burst forth upon you. The sovereign pleasure of God, for the present, stays his rough wind; otherwise it would come with fury, and your destruction would come like a whirl-

<sup>10</sup> As a text for his sermon Edwards chose *Deut.* XXXII, 35: "Their foot shall slide in due time."

This selection is from the "Application," i.e., the concluding portion of *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God*. The sermon itself is hardly characteristic of Edwards' preaching, which is described by Samuel Hopkins, a pupil of Jonathan Edwards, in these terms:

"His appearance in the desk was with a good grace, and his delivery easy, natural and very solemn. He had not a strong, loud voice, but appeared with such gravity and solemnity, and spake with such distinctness, clearness and precision, his words were so full of ideas, set in such a plain and striking light, that few speakers have been so able to demand the attention of an audience as he. His words often discovered a great degree of inward fervor, without much noise or external emotion, and fell with great weight on the minds of his hearers. He made but little motion of his head or hands in the desk, but spake as to discover the motion of his own heart, which tended in the most natural and effectual manner to move and affect others."

In describing the occasion attending Edwards' delivery of *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God* and the manifestations of the Great Awakening in Enfield, where Edwards preached

this sermon in 1741, Benjamin Trumbull wrote in his *History of Connecticut*:

"While the people in neighboring towns were in great distress for their souls, the inhabitants in that town (Enfield) were very secure, loose, and vain. A lecture had been appointed at Enfield, and the neighboring people, the night before, were so affected at the thoughtlessness of the inhabitants, and in such fear that God would, in his righteous judgment, pass them by, while the divine showers were falling all around them, as to be prostrate before him a considerable part of it, supplicating mercy for their souls. When the time appointed for the lecture came, a number of the neighboring ministers attended, and some from a distance. When they went into the meeting-house, the appearance of the assembly was thoughtless and vain. The people hardly conducted themselves with common decency. The Rev. Mr. Edwards, of Northampton, preached, and before the sermon was ended, the assembly appeared deeply impressed and bowed down, with an awful conviction of their sin and danger. There was such a breathing of distress and weeping, that the preacher was obliged to speak to the people and desire silence, that he might be heard. This was the beginning of the same great and prevailing concern in that place, with which the colony in general was visited."

wind, and you would be like the chaff of the summer threshing floor.

The wrath of God is like great waters that are dammed for the present; they increase more and more, and rise higher and higher, till an outlet is given; and the longer the stream is stopped, the more rapid and mighty is its course, when once it is let loose. It is true, that judgment against your evil works has not been executed hitherto; the floods of God's vengeance have been withheld; but your guilt in the mean time is constantly increasing, and you are every day treasuring up more wrath; the waters are constantly rising, and waxing more and more mighty; and there is nothing but the mere pleasure of God, that holds the waters back, that are unwilling to be stopped, and press hard to go forward. If God should only withdraw his hand from the flood-gate, it would immediately fly open, and the fiery floods of the fierceness and wrath of God, would rush forth with inconceivable fury, and would come upon you with <sup>20</sup> omnipotent power; and if your strength were ten thousand times greater than it is, yea, ten thousand times greater than the strength of the stoutest, sturdiest devil in hell, it would be nothing to withstand or endure it.

The bow of God's wrath is bent, and the arrow made ready on the string, and justice bends the arrow at your heart, and strains the bow, and it is nothing but the mere pleasure of God, and that of an angry God, without any promise or obligation at all, <sup>30</sup> that keeps the arrow one moment from being made drunk with your blood. Thus all you that never passed under a great change of heart, by the mighty power of the Spirit of God upon your souls; all you that were never born again, and made new creatures, and raised from being dead in sin, to a state of new, and before altogether unexperienced light and life, are in the hands of an angry God. However you may have reformed your life in many things, and may have had religious affections, and may keep up a form of <sup>40</sup> religion in your families and closets, and in the house of God, it is nothing but his mere pleasure that keeps you from being this moment swallowed up in everlasting destruction. However unconvinced you may now be of the truth of what you hear, by and by you

will be fully convinced of it. Those that are gone from being in the like circumstances with you, see that it was so with them; for destruction came suddenly upon most of them; when they expected nothing of it, and while they were saying, Peace and safety: now they see, that those things on which they depended for peace and safety, were nothing but thin air and empty shadows.

The God that holds you over the pit of hell, much <sup>10</sup> as one holds a spider, or some loathsome insect over the fire, abhors you, and is dreadfully provoked: his wrath towards you burns like fire; he looks upon you as worthy of nothing else, but to be cast into the fire; he is of purer eyes than to bear to have you in his sight; you are ten thousand times more abominable in his eyes, than the most hateful venomous serpent is in ours. You have offended him infinitely more than ever a stubborn rebel did his prince; and yet it is nothing but his hand that holds you from falling <sup>20</sup> into the fire every moment. It is to be ascribed to nothing else, that you did not go to hell the last night; that you was suffered to awake again in this world, after you closed your eyes to sleep. And there is no other reason to be given, why you have not dropped into hell since you arose in the morning, but that God's hand has held you up. There is no other reason to be given why you have not gone to hell, since you have sat here in the house of God, provoking his pure eyes by your sinful wicked manner of attending his solemn worship. Yea, there is nothing else that is to be given as a reason why you do not <sup>30</sup> this very moment drop down into hell.

O sinner! Consider the fearful danger you are in: it is a great furnace of wrath, a wide and bottomless pit, full of the fire of wrath, that you are held over in the hand of that God, whose wrath is provoked and incensed as much against you, as against many of the damned in hell. You hang by a slender thread, with the flames of divine wrath flashing about it, and <sup>40</sup> ready every moment to singe it, and burn it asunder; and you have no interest in any Mediator, and nothing to lay hold of to save yourself, nothing to keep off the flames of wrath, nothing of your own, nothing that you ever have done, nothing that you can do, to induce God to spare you one moment. . . .

*Freedom of the Will*<sup>11</sup>

## PART I, SECTION V

Concerning the Notion of Liberty,  
and of Moral Agency

The plain and obvious meaning of the words *Freedom* and *Liberty*, in common speech, is *power, opportunity or advantage, that any one has, to do as he pleases*. Or in other words, his being free from hindrance or impediment in the way of doing, or 10 conducting in any respect, as he wills.\* And the contrary to Liberty, whatever name we call that by, is a person's being hindered or unable to conduct as he will, or being necessitated to do otherwise.

If this which I have mentioned be the meaning of the word Liberty, in the ordinary use of language; as I trust that none that has ever learned to talk, and is unprejudiced, will deny; then it will follow, that in propriety of speech, neither Liberty, nor its contrary, can properly be ascribed to any being or thing, but 20 that which has such a faculty, power or property, as is called will. For that which is possessed of no such thing as will, cannot have any power or opportunity of doing according to its will, nor be necessitated to act contrary to its will, nor be restrained from acting agreeably to it. And therefore to talk of Liberty, or the contrary, as belonging to the very will itself, is not to speak good sense; if we judge of sense, and nonsense, by the original and proper signification of words. For the will itself is not an agent that has a 30 will: the power of choosing itself, has not a power of

choosing. That which has the power of volition or choice is the man or the soul, and not the power of volition itself. And he that has the Liberty of doing according to his will, is the agent or doer who is possessed of the will; and not the will which he is possessed of. We say with propriety, that a bird let loose has power and Liberty to fly; but not that the bird's power of flying has a power and Liberty of flying. To be free is the property of an agent, who is possessed of powers and faculties, as much as to be cunning, valiant, bountiful, or zealous. But these qualities are the properties of men or persons and not the properties of properties.

There are two things that are contrary to this which is called Liberty in common speech. One is constraint; the same is otherwise called force, compulsion, and coercion; which is a person's being necessitated to do a thing contrary to his will. The other is restraint; which is his being hindered, and not having power to do according to his will. But that which has no will, cannot be the subject of these things. I need say the less on this head, Mr. Locke having set the same thing forth, with so great clearness, in his *Essay on the Human Understanding*.

But one thing more I would observe concerning what is vulgarly called Liberty; namely, that power and opportunity for one to do and conduct as he will, or according to his choice, is all that is meant by it; without taking into the meaning of the word any thing of the cause or original of that choice; or at all considering how the person came to have such a volition; whether it was caused by some external motive or internal habitual bias; whether it was determined by some internal antecedent volition, or whether it happened without a cause; whether it was necessarily connected with something foregoing, or not connected. Let the person come by his volition or choice how he will, yet, if he is able, and there is nothing in the way to hinder his pursuing and executing his 40 will, the man is fully and perfectly free, according to the primary and common notion of freedom.

What has been said may be sufficient to show what is meant by Liberty, according to the common notions of mankind, and in the usual and primary acceptation of the word: but the word, as used by

\* I say not only doing, but conducting; because a voluntary forbearing to do, sitting still, keeping silence, &c., are instances of persons' conduct, about which Liberty is exercised; though they are not so properly called doing.

<sup>11</sup> The full title of the work is *A Careful and Strict Enquiry into the Modern Prevailing Notion, of that Freedom of Will which is supposed to be Essential to Moral Agency, Virtue and Vice, Reward and Punishment, Praise and Blame*.

Apparently Edwards first formed the design for the book in 1741, when he wrote to a friend that he had been engaged "pretty thoroughly in the study of the Arminian Controversy," 40 which, in his estimation, turned chiefly on the question of a free *versus* a determined will, and that he had "writ" considerably upon it" in his private papers. The book was laid aside during the excitements of the Great Awakening and the painful period of his difficulties that followed in Northampton. But in 1752, two years after his dismissal, while settled as a missionary in Stockbridge, Mass., he resumed the work. It was published in Boston in 1754.

Arminians,<sup>12</sup> Pelagians<sup>13</sup> and others, who oppose the Calvinists, has an entirely different signification. These several things belong to their notion of Liberty.

1. That it consists in a self-determining power in the will, or a certain sovereignty the will has over itself, and its own acts, whereby it determines its own volitions; so as not to be dependent in its determinations, on any cause without itself, nor determined by any thing prior to its own acts. 2. Indifference belongs to Liberty in their notion of it, or that the mind, previous to the act of volition, be in equilibrio. 3. Contingence is another thing that belongs and is essential to it; not in the common acceptation of the word, as that has been already explained, but as opposed to all necessity, or any fixed and certain connection with some previous ground or reason of its existence. They suppose the essence of Liberty so much to consist in these things, that unless the will of man be free in this sense, he has no real freedom, how much soever he may be at Liberty to act according to his will.

A moral Agent is a being that is capable of those actions that have a moral quality, and which can properly be denominated good or evil in a moral sense, virtuous or vicious, commendable or faulty. To moral Agency belongs a moral faculty, or sense of moral good and evil, or of such a thing as desert or worthiness, of praise or blame, reward or punishment; and a capacity which an agent has of being influenced in his actions by moral inducements or motives, exhibited to the view of understanding and reason, to engage to a conduct agreeable to the moral faculty.

The sun is very excellent and beneficial in its action and influence on the earth, in warming it, and causing it to bring forth its fruits; but it is not a moral Agent. Its action, though good, is not virtuous or meritorious. Fire that breaks out in a city, and consumes great part of it, is very mischievous in its operation; but is not a moral Agent. What it does is not faulty or sinful, or deserving of any punishment. The brute creatures are not moral Agents. The actions of some of them are very profitable and pleasant; others are very hurtful; yet, seeing they have no moral faculty, or sense of desert, and do not act from

choice guided by understanding, or with a capacity of reasoning and reflecting, but only from instinct, and are not capable of being influenced by moral inducements, their actions are not properly sinful or virtuous; nor are they properly the subjects of any such moral treatment for what they do, as moral Agents are for their faults or good deeds. . . .

#### PART II, SECTION I

##### Showing the Manifest Inconsistence of the Arminian Notion of Liberty of Will, Consisting in the Will's Self-determining Power

Having taken notice of those things which may be necessary to be observed, concerning the meaning of the principal terms and phrases made use of in controversies, concerning human Liberty, and particularly observed what Liberty is, according to the common language and general apprehension of mankind, and what it is as understood and maintained by Arminians; I proceed to consider the Arminian notion of the Freedom of the Will, and the supposed necessity of it in order to moral agency, or in order to any one's being capable of virtue or vice, and properly the subject of command or counsel, praise or blame, promises or threatenings, rewards or punishments; or whether that which has been described, as the thing meant by Liberty in common speech, be not sufficient, and the only Liberty which makes or can make any one a moral agent, and so properly the subject of these things. In this Part, I shall consider whether any such thing be possible or conceivable, as that Freedom of Will which Arminians insist on; and shall inquire, whether any such sort of Liberty be necessary to moral agency, &c., in the next Part.

And first of all, I shall consider the notion of a self-determining Power in the Will; wherein, according to the Arminians, does most essentially consist the Will's Freedom, and shall particularly inquire, whether it be not plainly absurd, and a manifest inconsistency, to suppose that the Will itself determines all the free acts of the Will.

Here I shall not insist on the great impropriety of such phrases and ways of speaking as the Will's determining itself; because actions are to be ascribed to agents, and not properly to the powers of agents; which improper way of speaking leads to many mistakes, and much confusion, as Mr. Locke observes. But I shall suppose that the Arminians, when they speak of the Will's determining itself, do by the Will

<sup>12</sup> Followers of Arminius (1560–1609), Dutch Protestant divine and reformer, opposed to Calvin at various points.

<sup>13</sup> Followers of Pelagius (fl. 400), British monk who maintained that the will of man is free and denied the doctrine of original sin.

mean the soul willing. I shall take it for granted, that when they speak of the Will, as the determiner, they mean the soul in the exercise of a power of willing, or acting voluntarily. I shall suppose this to be their meaning, because nothing else can be meant, without the grossest and plainest absurdity. In all cases when we speak of the powers or principles of acting, as doing such things, we mean that the agents which have these Powers of acting, do them in the exercise of those Powers. So when we say, valor fights 10 courageously, we mean, the man who is under the influence of valor fights courageously. When we say, love seeks the object loved, we mean, the person loving seeks that object. When we say, the understanding discerns, we mean the soul in the exercise of that faculty. So when it is said, the Will decides or determines, the meaning must be, that the person in the exercise of a Power of willing and choosing, or the soul acting voluntarily, determines.

Therefore, if the Will determines all its own free 20 acts, the soul determines all the free acts of the Will in the exercise of a Power of willing and choosing; or which is the same thing, it determines them of choice; it determines its own acts by choosing its own acts. If the Will determines the Will, then choice orders and determines the choice; and acts of choice are subject to the decision, and follow the conduct of other acts of choice. And therefore if the Will determines all its own free acts, then every free act of choice is determined by a preceding act of choice, 30 choosing that act. And if that preceding act of the Will or choice be also a free act, then by these principles, in this act too, the Will is self-determined; that is, this, in like manner, is an act that the soul voluntarily chooses; or, which is the same thing, it is an act determined still by a preceding act of the Will, choosing that. And the like may again be observed of the last mentioned act, which brings us directly to a contradiction; for it supposes an act of the Will preceding the first act in the whole train, directing 40 and determining the rest; or a free act of the Will, before the first free act of the Will. Or else we must come at last to an act of the Will, determining the consequent acts, wherein the Will is not self-determined, and so is not a free act, in this notion of freedom; but if the first act in the train, determining and fixing the rest, be not free, none of them all can be free; as is manifest at first view, but shall be demonstrated presently.

If the Will, which we find governs the members of the body and determines and commands their motions and actions, does also govern itself, and determine its own motions and actions, it doubtless determines them the same way, even by antecedent volitions. The Will determines which way the hands and feet shall move, by an act of volition or choice; and there is no other way of the Will's determining, directing or commanding any thing at all. Whatsoever the Will commands, it commands by an act of the Will. And if it has itself under its command, and determines itself in its own actions, it doubtless does it the same way that it determines other things which are under its command. So that if the freedom of the Will consists in this, that it has itself and its own actions under its command and direction, and its own volitions are determined by itself, it will follow, that every free volition arises from another antecedent volition, directing and commanding that; and if that directing volition be also free, in that also the Will is determined; that is to say, that directing volition is determined by another going before that, and so on, until we come to the first volition in the whole series; and if that first volition be free, and the Will self-determined in it, then that is determined by another volition preceding that, which is a contradiction; because by the supposition, it can have none before it to direct or determine it, being the first in the train. But if that first volition is not determined by any preceding act of the Will, then that act is not determined by the Will, and so is not free in the *Arminian* notion of freedom, which consists in the Will's self-determination. And if that first act of the Will, which determines and fixes the subsequent acts, be not free, none of the following acts, which are determined by it, can be free. If we suppose there are five acts in the train, the fifth and last determined by the fourth, and the fourth by the third, the third by the second, and the second by the first; if the first is not determined by the Will, and so not free, then none of them are truly determined by the Will; that is, that each of them is as it is, and not otherwise, is not first owing to the Will, but to the determination of the first in the series, which is not dependent on the Will, and is that which the Will has no hand in the determination of. And this being that which decides what the rest shall be, and determines their existence; therefore the first determination of their existence is not from the Will. The case is just the same, if

instead of a chain of five acts of the Will, we should suppose a succession of ten, or a hundred, or ten thousand. If the first act be not free, being determined by something out of the Will, and this determines the next to be agreeable to itself, and that the next, and so on; they are none of them free, but all originally depend on, and are determined by some cause out of the Will; and so all freedom in the case is excluded, and no act of the Will can be free, according to this notion of freedom. If we should suppose a long chain of ten thousand links, so connected, that if the first link moves, it will move the next, and that the next, and so the whole chain must be determined to motion, and in the direction of its motion, by the motion of the first link, and that is moved by something else. In this case, though all the links but one, are moved by other parts of the same chain; yet it appears that the motion of no one, nor the direction of its motion, is from any self-moving or self-determining power in the chain, any more than if every link were immediately moved by something that did not belong to the chain. If the Will be not

free in the first act, which causes the next, then neither is it free in the next, which is caused by that first act; for though indeed the Will caused it, yet it did not cause it freely, because the preceding act, by which it was caused, was not free. And again, if the Will be not free in the second act, so neither can it be in the third, which is caused by that; because in like manner, that third was determined by an act of the Will that was not free. And so we may go on to the next act, and from that to the next; and how long soever the succession of acts is, it is all one. If the first on which the whole chain depends, and which determines all the rest, be not a free act, the Will is not free in causing or determining any one of those acts, because the act by which it determines them all, is not a free act, and therefore the Will is no more free in determining them, than if it did not cause them at all. Thus, this *Arminian* notion of Liberty of the Will, consisting in the Will's *self-determination*, is repugnant to itself, and shuts itself wholly out of the world. . . .

1754

*To the Trustees of the College of New Jersey at Princeton*

Stockbridge, Oct. 19, 1757.

Rev. and Hon. Gentlemen,

I was not a little surprised, on receiving the unexpected notice, of your having made choice of me, to succeed the late President Burr, as the Head of Nassau Hall.—I am much in doubt, whether I am called to undertake the business, which you have done me the unmerited honour to choose me for.—If some regard may be had to my outward comfort, I might mention the many inconveniences, and great detriment, which may be sustained, by my removing, with my numerous family, so far from all the estate I have in the world, (without any prospect of disposing of it, under present circumstances, but with great loss,) now when we have scarcely got over the trouble and damage, sustained by our removal from Northampton, and have but just begun to have our affairs in a comfortable situation, for a subsistence in this place; and the expense I must immediately be at, to put myself into circumstances, tolerably comporting with the needful support of the honours of the office I am invited to; which will not well consist with my ability.

\* But this is not my main objection. The chief difficulties in my mind, in the way of accepting this important and arduous office, are these two: First, my own defects, unfitting me for such an undertaking, many of which are generally known; beside others, of which my own heart is conscious.—I have a constitution, in many respects peculiarly unhappy, attended with flaccid solids, vapid, sisy and scarce fluids, and a low tide of spirits; often occasioning a kind of childish weakness and contemptibleness of speech, presence, and demeanor, with a disagreeable dulness and stiffness, much unfitting me for conversation, but more especially for the government of a college.—This makes me shrink at the thoughts of taking upon me, in the decline of life, such a new and great business, attended with such a multiplicity of cares, and requiring such a degree of activity, alertness, and spirit of government; especially as succeeding one so remarkably well qualified in these respects, giving occasion to every one to remark the wide difference. I am also deficient in some parts of learning, particularly in Algebra, and the higher parts of Mathematics, and in the Greek Classics; my Greek learning having



been chiefly in the New Testament.—The other thing is this; that my engaging in this business will not well consist with those views, and that course of employ in my study, which have long engaged and swallowed up my mind, and been the chief entertainment and delight of my life.

And here, honoured Sirs, (emboldened, by the testimony I have now received of your unmerited esteem, to rely on your candour,) I will with freedom open myself to you.

My method of study, from my first beginning the work of the ministry, has been very much by writing; applying myself, in this way, to improve every important hint; pursuing the clue to my utmost, when any thing in reading, meditation, or conversation, has been suggested to my mind, that seemed to promise light, in any weighty point; thus penning what appeared to me my best thoughts, on innumerable subjects, for my own benefit.—The longer I prosecuted my studies, in this method, the more habitual it became, and the more pleasant and profitable I found it.—The farther I travelled in this way, the more and wider the field opened, which has occasioned my laying out many things in my mind, to do in this manner, if God should spare my life, which my heart hath been much upon; particularly many things against most of the prevailing errors of the present day, which I cannot with any patience see maintained, (to the utter subverting of the gospel of Christ,) with so high a hand, and so long continued a triumph, with so little control, when it appears so evident to me, that there is truly no foundation for any of this glorying and insult. I have already published something on one of the main points in dispute between the Arminians and Calvinists: and have it in view, God willing, (as I have already signified to the public,) in like manner to consider all the other controverted points, and have done much towards a preparation for it.—But beside these, I have had on my mind and heart, (which I long ago began, not with any view to publication,) a great work, which I call a *History of the Work of Redemption*, a body of divinity in an entire new method, being thrown into the form of a history; considering the affair of Christian Theology, as the whole of it, in each part, stands in reference to the great work of redemption by Jesus Christ; which I suppose to be, of all others, the grand design of God, and the *summum* and *ultimum* of all the divine operations and decrees; par-

ticularly considering all parts of the grand scheme, in their historical order.—The order of their existence, or their being brought forth to view, in the course of divine dispensations, or the wonderful series of successive acts and events; beginning from eternity, and descending from thence to the great work and successive dispensations of the infinitely wise God, in time, considering the chief events coming to pass in the church of God, and revolutions in the world of mankind, affecting the state of the church and the affair of redemption, which we have an account of in history or prophecy; till at last, we come to the general resurrection, last judgment, and consummation of all things; when it shall be said, *It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End.*—Concluding my work, with the consideration of that perfect state of things, which shall be finally settled, to last for eternity.—This history will be carried on with regard to all three worlds, heaven, earth and hell; considering the connected, successive events and alterations in each, so far as the scriptures give any light; introducing all parts of divinity in that order which is most scriptural and most natural; a method which appears to me the most beautiful and entertaining, wherein every divine doctrine will appear to the greatest advantage, in the brightest light, in the most striking manner, shewing the admirable contexture and harmony of the whole.

I have also, for my own profit and entertainment, done much towards another great work, which I call the *Harmony of the Old and New Testament*, in three parts. The first, considering the Prophecies of the Messiah, his redemption and kingdom; the evidences of their references to the Messiah, etc. comparing them all one with another, demonstrating their agreement, true scope, and sense; also considering all the various particulars wherein those prophecies have their exact fulfilment; showing the universal, precise, and admirable correspondence between predictions and events. The second part, considering the Types of the Old Testament, shewing the evidence of their being intended as representations of the great things of the gospel of Christ; and the agreement of the type with the antitype. The third and great part, considering the Harmony of the Old and New Testament, as to doctrine and precept. In the course of this work, I find there will be occasion for an explanation of a very great part of the holy Scriptures; which may, in such a view, be explained in a method, which to me



seems the most entertaining and profitable, best tending to lead the mind to a view of the true spirit, design, life and soul of the scriptures, as well as their proper use and improvement.—I have also many other things in hand, in some of which I have made great progress, which I will not trouble you with an account of. Some of these things, if divine providence favour, I should be willing to attempt a publication of. So far as I myself am able to judge of what talents I have, for benefitting my fellow creatures by word, I think I can write better than I can speak.

My heart is so much in these studies, that I cannot find it in my heart to be willing to put myself into an incapacity to pursue them any more in the future part of my life, to such a degree as I must, if I undertake to go through the same course of employ, in the office of president, that Mr. Burr did, instructing in all the languages, and taking the whole care of the instruction of one of the classes, in all parts of learning, besides his other labours. If I should see light to determine me to accept the place offered me, I should be willing to take upon me the work of a president, so far as it consists in the general inspection of the whole society; and to be subservient to the school, as to their order and methods of study and instruction, assisting, myself, in the immediate instruction in the arts and sciences, (as discretion

should direct, and occasion serve, and the state of things require,) especially of the senior class; and added to all, should be willing to do the whole work of a professor of divinity, in public and private lectures, proposing questions to be answered, and some to be discussed in writing and free conversation, in meetings of graduates, and others, appointed in proper seasons, for these ends. It would be now out of my way, to spend time, in a constant teaching of the languages; unless it be the Hebrew tongue; which I should be willing to improve myself in, by instructing others.

On the whole, I am much at a loss, with respect to the way of duty, in this important affair: I am in doubt, whether, if I should engage in it, I should not do what both you and I would be sorry for afterwards. Nevertheless, I think the greatness of the affair, and the regard due to so worthy and venerable a body, as that of the trustees of Nassau Hall, requires my taking the matter into serious consideration. And unless you should appear to be discouraged, by the things which I have now represented, as to any farther expectation from me, I shall proceed to ask advice, of such as I esteem most wise, friendly and faithful: if, after the mind of the Commissioners in Boston is known, it appears that they consent to leave me at liberty, with respect to the business they have employed me in here.

## BENJAMIN FRANKLIN (1706-1790)

Franklin, only three years younger than Edwards, outlived the defender of Puritanism by thirty-two years. As Edwards' order passed, Franklin became the champion of a new order, that of the Enlightenment, scientific deism, political liberalism, and humanitarian progressivism. While "Edwards' conversions at Northampton were reckoned as thirty a week, Franklin was selling 10,000 copies of *Poor Richard's Almanac*." And when, after three months as president of Princeton, Edwards died in 1758, Franklin, having already "drawn lightning from heaven," was preparing soon to "snatch the sceptre from tyrants." While Edwards devoted his life to "exploring the fearful mysteries of God," Franklin was "making himself thoroughly at home with Man"; for as Edwards incorporated in his large nature the religious experience of his times, so Franklin represented the secular experience of the eighteenth century. During his life, which all but spanned the century, Franklin's industrious versatility touched every important movement of the age. He was active as a tradesman, printer, publisher, publicist, propagandist, economist, public official, diplomat, statesman, philosopher, man of letters, philanthropist, inventor, scientist, moralist, scientific deist, and man of the world. His copious mind and industrious versatility furnished him points of contact with men as various as Increase and Cotton Mather, the Puritan priests, Whitefield the Methodist, Rush the physician, West the artist, Webster the lexicographer, and Jay, Adams, Jefferson, Washington, and a host of other American statesmen; while abroad he met the deist Voltaire, the leveler Tom Paine, the celebrated North, the ministerial Pitt, the chemist Priestley, the statesman Burke, the despotic minister Vergennes, and the aristocrats of Louis' court in France. In his youthful years he set type in the London of Pope and Swift's day and talked with Bernard Mandeville, author of *The Fable of the Bees; or, Private Vices Public Benefits* (1723). In middle life he associated with the members of the Royal Society in London and the Physiocrats in France, while submitting to Parliamentary examination in London and winning diplomatic triumphs in Paris. He was as capable in affairs

of state and diplomacy as he was gracious in high social circles or honored among learned groups, employing his pen with equal finesse, whether writing documents of state or exchanging billets-doux with the ladies of the French court. In his old age he read the tidings of the Fall of the Bastille; he heard the wranglings of the Constitutional Convention, throwing his wisdom and influence on the side of adoption; and he lived to see the United States of America established.

Franklin's *Autobiography* has made the details of his earlier life a matter of common knowledge. The fifteenth of seventeen children of a thrifty tallow chandler of Boston, sprung from humble, sturdy stock, he inherited from his father not only his strong physical constitution but also "solid judgment in prudential matters." On his mother's side he was descended from Peter Folger, one of the early New England settlers, of whom Cotton Mather thought well enough to commemorate him in the *Magnalia* as "a learned and godly Englishman." He had enjoyed only about two years of schooling when his father put him to work cutting wicks, filling candle molds, boiling soap, and running errands—work very little to Benjamin's taste, which turned more to books. He soon exhausted the slender stock of his father's library, which consisted chiefly of the New England historians and theologians. With his first money he bought a copy of Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, and after he had thoroughly digested it, traded it for Burton's *Historical Collections*, a class of writings for which he had a special fondness.

A new period of his life began when, at the age of twelve, he was apprenticed to his brother James, a printer and the editor of the *New-England Courant*. His mind profited by the information he gathered from the material he set to type; and, what is equally important, his training as a typesetter and proof-reader taught him accuracy and dexterity in handling words precisely. Later he freely acknowledged, "It has ever since been a pleasure to me to see good workmen handle their tools; and it has been useful to me, having learned so much by it as to be able to do little jobs myself." That is, he came to look

upon words like tools; and while he escaped becoming a poet, as he laughingly admitted, his use of words in much the same way that a master workman handles the implements of his trade led to his development of an effective, workmanlike prose style that eventually became his most useful accomplishment and the principal means to his advancement.

Meanwhile he steadily added to his self-acquired store of knowledge, passing from Plutarch's *Lives* to Defoe's *Essay on Projects*, from which he doubtless gathered early a good deal of the inventive zeal that he later displayed. Cotton Mather's *Essays to Do Good* set his mind in the direction of the humanitarian purposefulness for which he became distinguished. Careful reading of Shaftesbury and Collins made him "a real doubter" in many points of religious doctrine, while Xenophon's *Memorable Things of Socrates* led to his adoption of the Socratic strategy in argumentation, even to making himself a nuisance to people by leading them into confusing and contradictory positions in theological questions. Locke's *On the Human Understanding* prepared his mind for the acceptance of the experimental, empirical, and inductive method of studying the physical world; while his exercises in turning the *Spectator* papers into his own words (both prose and verse) and then back into Addisonian prose were all-important for the development of his clear and effective prose style.

Contact with printer's type and ink exerted another influence on young Franklin—an itch to see his writing in print. In the *Autobiography* he relates how, fearing that his brother would not print any of the writings of his apprentice if his authorship were known, he contrived to slip one of his anonymous compositions under the door, taking care himself to be present when it was discovered.

It was found in the morning, and communicated to his writing friends when they call'd in as usual. They read it, commented on it in my hearing, and I had the exquisite pleasure of finding it met with their approbation, and that, in their different guesses at the author, none were named but men of some character among us for their learning and ingenuity.

Thus were initiated the series of fourteen *Dogood Papers*, printed anonymously in the *New-England Courant* during 1822.

Soon thereafter, young Franklin found his apprenticeship under his brother getting more and more intolerable, and in 1723 he resolved to run away. His entry into Philadelphia as described in the *Autobiography*, however humble and poor a figure he cut at the time, turned out to be only the first step in a

long triumphal march through competence and achievements, to successes and honors such as no earlier American had won. It can hardly be doubted that Franklin's going to Philadelphia was one of the most fortunate events in his life, for in that relatively cosmopolitan and genuinely friendly city, opportunities for advancement were offered to the runaway apprentice that might never have come to him in his native city. Thus Franklin's case becomes an early illustration of the quipster's remark that "Boston is a good place to be from."

In Philadelphia, while working for the printer, Samuel Keimer, he prospered, even to being patronized by Governor Keith, who sent him to England on a commission to buy type and a printing press to be set up in his behalf by Keith. When Keith's promised credit did not arrive, Franklin, thrown on his own resources for a livelihood, found work in the large printing establishments of London. Alert to learn the latest improvements of the trade, he turned his disappointment to advantage, and when he returned to Philadelphia, he was a far more experienced and efficient printer than when he had left eighteen months before. During his stay in London he also expanded his knowledge of men and of books, while moving in the infectious atmosphere of liberal thought represented by Henry Pemberton and Bernard Mandeville.

Pursuing his frugal, prosperous career, he set himself up in 1829 as an independent printer in Philadelphia. The next year he tucked away in his pocket a nice contract by which he became the printer for the Pennsylvania Assembly for the next thirty-four years. He became prominent in the Masonic lodge and began to engage in civic and philanthropic enterprises while forming profitable printing partnerships and other business alliances as he progressed, with the result that in 1748 his industry, thrift, and foresight had rewarded him with a safe competence. He was thus enabled, at the age of forty-two, to retire from the active management of his business and to devote, for another forty-two years, all of his time to those public, philanthropic, and scientific affairs which had come to absorb more and more of his time, and which he preferred to the acquisition of greater wealth.

Franklin's well-known advocacy of the prudential virtues of thrift and industry is often stressed in a way to suggest that he was motivated solely by self-interest. He was, it may freely be admitted, a practical moralist, a successful tradesman and printer, a shrewd propagandist and financier, a clever diplomat, and a disciple of efficiency, but he was also a dis-

interested inventor who refused to take out patents for his contrivances, a philanthropic humanitarian, and a scientist, philosopher, and statesman who gave of himself with the liberality of a prince in the service of his fellow men. He had a true passion for scientific and philosophical inquiries, and throughout his young manhood and middle life he complained that business, public and private, prevented his pursuing his "philosophical amusements" and scientific investigations. In 1765, upon completing his negotiations in England in behalf of the Pennsylvania Assembly, he promised Lord Kames that he would engage in no other political affairs; but year after year his people called upon him for services which only he could render; and in 1785, in his eightieth year, when he entertained the hope that his countrymen would grant him rest and leisure during the few years that remained after his ceaseless efforts in their behalf, he was drafted to serve for three years as President of the commonwealth of Pennsylvania. He could only comment:

I have not firmness enough to resist the unanimous desire of my country folks, and I find myself harnessed again to their service. . . . They engrossed the prime of my life. They have eaten my flesh, and seem resolved now to pick my bones.

In his public life he rose from the position of justice of the peace to clerk of the Pennsylvania Assembly in 1736, postmaster of Philadelphia in 1737, deputy postmaster-general to the colonies in 1753, and so on to commissioner from Pennsylvania to the Albany Congress in 1754, where he proposed the Albany Plan of Union. As supervisor of the construction of forts in the province of Pennsylvania, he aided General Braddock in getting supplies and transportation during 1755 and unsuccessfully urged the General to adopt the methods of frontier warfare that might have averted his defeat. He became colonial agent in London for Pennsylvania in 1757 and again in 1764; by 1770 he represented also Georgia, New Jersey, and Massachusetts. He was Postmaster-General under the Confederation. In 1775 he was a member of the Philadelphia Committee of Safety, a delegate to the Second Continental Congress, and a member of the Committee of Secret Correspondence. In 1776 he was commissioner to Canada, president of the Constitutional Convention, one of the committee to frame the Declaration of Independence, and commissioner of Congress to the French court. He became the chief arbiter and signer of the commercial treaty and of the alliance for mutual defense with France, signer of the Treaty of

Paris in 1783, negotiator of treaties with Sweden (1783) and with Prussia (1785), president of the commonwealth of Pennsylvania from 1785 to 1787, and finally, delegate from Pennsylvania to the Constitutional Convention. Among all the illustrious men of his time he is the only one whose name is affixed to all four principal documents of the Revolutionary period: the Declaration of Independence, the treaty of alliance with France, the treaty of peace with Great Britain, and the Constitution of the United States.

Franklin's passion for service manifests itself nowhere more tellingly than in his educational and generally philanthropic projects. As a man who in his youth had lacked social advantages and a proper education, he made up these wants as best he could through self-study. He read assiduously during hours stolen from sleep or recreation, confessing that his "only recreation" for many years after his return from England in 1726 was his reading. He found time somehow to make himself one of the best-read men of his time, even to acquiring Latin and the modern languages of French, Spanish, Italian, and German at a time when the classical languages were considered the only linguistic requirements of a scholar. But his zeal for education did not stop with himself, although such organizations as the Junto and the Philadelphia Library Company were certainly partially motivated by his own desire for self-improvement. His first major educational project was the formation in 1727 of the Junto, or Leather Apron Club, which became in its day "the best school of philosophy, morality, and politics that then existed in the province." Recalling Defoe's proposals for the formation of Friendly Societies and Mather's urging, in his *Essays to Do Good*, the formation of mutual improvement societies, Franklin also took a cue from the organization of Masonic lodges as he had observed them in London. The members of the Junto were urged to communicate to one another everything significant "in history, morality, poetry, physics, travel, mechanic arts, or other parts of knowledge." Their utilitarian object was equalled only by their humanitarian purposes. The members were sworn to "love truth for truth's sake," but also to be "serviceable" and "to love mankind in general, of whatever profession or religion soever," and to oppose persecution "for mere speculative opinions, or external ways of worship." They cultivated a rigorous ethical program, and members were encouraged to report not only "unhappy effects of intemperance" and of "imprudence, or passion, or of any other vice or folly," but also the "happy effects of temperance, of prudence.

of moderation." Thus they encouraged tolerance, the empirical method, scientific disinterestedness, and humanitarianism.

Out of the Junto grew the Philadelphia Library Company in 1731 to become "the mother of all the North American subscription libraries." It grew rapidly, and an inventory of 1757 shows that by that time it owned what was necessary for an alert mind to discover all the theses and their implications—philosophic, religious, political, scientific, and social—that were needed to overthrow priest and king, dogma and authority. Franklin also played a prominent part in the founding of the American Philosophical Society in 1744, becoming its first secretary and subsequently its president. In 1749 he founded the Philadelphia Academy, later the College, and eventually the University of Pennsylvania. In his *Proposal for Promoting Useful Knowledge among the British Plantations in America* (1743) and the *Proposals Relating to the Education of Youth in Pensilvania* (1749) he urged the necessity of supplying "the succeeding Age with Men qualified to serve the Publick with Honour to themselves, and to their Country." Designed for the citizenry rather than for the clergy, offering instruction in English and the modern foreign, as well as the classical, languages and literatures, in physical culture, natural history, mechanics, mathematics (especially arithmetic), and gardening, rather than sectarian theology, Franklin's academy was more utilitarian and secular than any other school then existing in the colonies.

But no amount of learning or theorizing, unless it could be turned to use, was worth much to Franklin: "I have always set a greater value on the character of a *doer of good* than on any other kind of reputation." Less concerned about the golden pavements in Heaven than that the cobblestones on Chestnut Street should be evenly laid, less troubled about saving his soul from burning in Hell than that there should be a fire company in Philadelphia to protect his own and his neighbor's house, less interested in the light that never was on sea or land than that there should be street lamps to light the belated wayfarer to his home—Franklin set about, with true Yankee practicality, to put theory to use. His inventive ingenuity resulted in many improvements in the techniques of printing, his perfection of the stove that bears his name, and the invention of the lightning rod. He inquired into the causes and cure of smoky chimneys. He instituted a better system of paving, cleaning, and lighting the streets of Philadelphia, methods that were widely adopted elsewhere; he organized the first regularly paid police force in

the colonies; he founded the first fire insurance company in Philadelphia; he organized an efficient fire-fighting company in Philadelphia; he established the first charity hospital in the city; and he inaugurated a postal system in his city and for the colonies without which they could hardly have developed the cohesion necessary to fight and win the war for independence.

Beyond these more practical applications of his desire to improve the lot of mankind on this earth, he turned his curiosity to the realm of natural philosophy, and in 1752 demonstrated the identity of lightning and electricity, going on to a variety of investigations into such subjects as evaporation, ocean temperatures, the course of storms over the Atlantic, the distillation of sea water, the sources of springs, the cultivation of grass, the effects of the sun's rays on cloth, and the efficiency of various mediums for sound. On the strength of his accomplishments in these experiments he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of London in 1756 and to membership in other learned or scientific societies of Edinburgh, Göttingen, Rotterdam, Paris, Padua, Madrid, Lyons, Orleans, Manchester, Milan, London, and St. Petersburg, while collecting honorary degrees from Harvard, Yale, William and Mary, the University of St. Andrews, and Oxford, besides numerous medals and awards in honor of his contributions to knowledge. In the end, his international fame rested as much on his character as a statesman, diplomat, and economist as on his scientific and philosophic enquiries. However, in a conversation reputed to have taken place between Joseph II of Austria and himself, he said, "Necessity . . . made me a politician. . . . I was Franklin the *Philosopher* to the world long before I had in fact, become Franklin the *Politician*." His prior and real interest lay in scientific research and speculation, and there can be little doubt that "his doctrine of scientific deism antedated and conditioned his political, economic, and humanitarian interests."

In his case, science and philosophy reinforced each other in the determination of his religion and in the regulation of his entire outlook on life. For one thing, his fame as a scientist preceded him wherever he went, and in the course of his wide travels in Europe he found himself openly welcomed by, and invited to exchange ideas with, the great savants of England, Holland, Germany, France, Italy, and Spain. In England he associated with liberals like Richard Price, lodged with the philosopher Hume, consulted with Adam Smith, and was on intimate terms with the chemist and political liberal, Joseph Priestley. In

France he knew Voltaire, Turgot, Buffon, Mirabeau, Quesnay, Lavoisier, Robespierre, D'Alembert, Condorcet, La Rochefoucauld, and the Abbé Raynal, besides many others hardly less prominent. While there were great differences among them, they possessed minds that were alike "free, liberal, and inquiring"; and Franklin found in them all confirmation for the rational views and enlightened cast of mind that his early reading had inspired in him.

Following an early reading of Locke, doubts raised concerning the Calvinism in which he had been reared set his mind off on a series of questions from which there was no return to bibliolatry. Passages like the following in Locke induced an *odium theologicum* at the same time exalting the reason as the only proper and efficacious medium for religious inquiries:

Since . . . the precepts of Natural Religion are plain, and very intelligible to all mankind, and seldom come to be controverted; and other revealed truths, which are conveyed to us by books and languages, are liable to the common and natural obscurities and difficulties incident to words; methinks it would become us to be more careful and diligent in observing the former, and less magisterial, positive, and imperious, in imposing our own sense and interpretations of the latter.

Nothing that is contrary to, and inconsistent with, the clear and self-evident dictates of reason, has a right to be urged or assented to as a matter of faith, wherein reason hath nothing to do.

By the time he reached sixteen, his reading of some of the Boyle lectures (presumably Bentley's *Folly of Atheism* of 1692 and Derham's *Physico-Theology* of 1711-1712), of Anthony Collins' *Priestcraft in Perfection* (1710) and *Discourse of Free-Thinking* (1713), and of Shaftesbury's *Inquiry Concerning Virtue or Merit* and his *Characteristics* had effected a conversion, and he avowed himself a "thorough Deist." In London, while setting up Wollaston's *Religion of Nature Delineated*, he was inspired to write his *Dissertation on Liberty and Necessity, Pleasure and Pain* (1725), which led to an acquaintance with Lyons, author of *The Infallibility of Human Judgement* [*sic*]<sup>1</sup>—a connection which in turn led to an intimacy with Dr. Henry Pemberton, then assisting Newton in the preparation of his third edition of the *Principia*. Thus he came close to the fountain-head from which scientific deism derived its basic principles, and it is not surprising that in 1728 he incorporated the fundamental deistic ideas in his *Articles of Belief and Acts of Religion*—a statement of principles from which apparently he never swerved in any essentials during his natural life. This creed is notable as allowing for only one God and for its

assertion that proper worship of God consists primarily in the cultivation of virtue and the doing good to man. There is no hint of a Christ as a necessary redeemer, of Scripture as the sole revelation, or of atonement for sin by repentance. Fundamentally this is the creed that he reiterated sixty-eight years later in his famous letter to Ezra Stiles:

Here is my Creed. I believe in one God, Creator of the Universe. That he governs it by his Providence. That he ought to be worshipped. That the most acceptable service we render to him is doing good to his other Children. That the soul of Man is immortal, and will be treated with Justice in another Life respecting its Conduct in this. These I take to be the fundamental Principles of all sound Religion, and I regard them as you do in whatever Sect I meet with them.

As to Jesus of Nazareth, my Opinion of whom you particularly desire, I think the System of Morals and his Religion, as he left them to us, the best the World ever saw or is likely to see; but I apprehend it has received various corrupting Changes, and I have, with most of the present Dissenters in England, some Doubts as to his Divinity; tho' it is a question I do not dogmatize upon, having never studied it, and think it needless to busy myself with it now, when I expect soon an Opportunity of knowing the Truth with less Trouble. I see no harm, however, in its being believed, if that Belief has a good Consequence, as probably it has, of making his Doctrines more respected and better observed. . . .

I shall only add, respecting myself, that, having experienced the Goodness of that Being in conducting me prosperously thro' a long life, I have no doubt of its Continuance in the next, though without the smallest Conceit of meriting such Goodness. . . .

Although his death was hardly more than a month off, Franklin was still the prudential man, and consequently added this characteristic postscript:

I confide, that you will not expose me to Criticism and censure by publishing any part of this Communication to you. I have ever let others enjoy their religious Sentiments, without reflecting on them for those that appeared to me unsupportable and even absurd. All Sects here, and we have a great Variety, have experienced my good will in assisting them with Subscriptions for building their new Places of Worship; and, as I have never opposed any of their Doctrines, I hope to go out of the World in Peace with them all.

Franklin's creed is a succinct, though moderate, statement of scientific deism as formulated during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries on the bases of Newtonian science and Lockean psychology. It represents an assertion of the rational credo of Newton, Diderot, and Voltaire over the religious concepts of Luther, Calvin, and Edwards—an Age of Enlightenment superseding an Era of Faith.

Motivated by the amazing discoveries of Newton

respecting the operation of universal laws throughout the cosmos, the men of the Enlightenment came to regard the universe as one gigantic machine, controlled by harmonious, changeless laws, behind which stood an impersonal Creator, who instituted the laws and set them in motion, but who then withdrew himself from his creations, to stand aloof merely to observe their operation. He no longer interferes in the affairs of the world, or changes the laws by which it operates, or works any special providences. The remarkable success of Newton in formulating the laws of motion led the disciples of the Enlightenment to believe that man might penetrate the secrets of nature, that human reason might ultimately "read the thoughts of God." For the attainment of this goal, they argued, man would do better to study the entities of mind and matter in time and space than to quarrel over the meaning of the equivocal terms of the Scriptures. With infinite faith in the benevolence of nature and the ability of man's reason to penetrate to the core of rationality underlying all nature, the scientific rationalist assumed that natural laws are designed to afford man all the happiness he is capable of, provided man brings himself into harmony with those eternal, natural laws. As part of this natural universe, man originally shared in its benevolence, and accordingly the deist had faith in man's goodness as opposed to the Calvinist's belief in man's natural depravity. He was ready to admit the evils of tyranny, priestcraft, poverty, and inequality in the world, but these he referred to long accretions of traditionalism and superstition by which man had fallen from his harmonious adjustment to this divine, universal law and order. What was desired was a rededication of the human reason to the search for this orderliness and a readjustment of man's life and of his environment to the findings of the enlightened reason.

Corollary with these principles deduced from Newtonianism was the psychology and sociology of John Locke, the close friend of Newton, with whom the great mathematician had discussed his theories in detail. Locke had denied innate ideas and all inherited traits supposedly setting men apart from each other. He had affirmed the all-importance of a proper education according to logic and natural principles and the readjustment of man's environment in accordance with those principles by the removal of institutions and conventions inimical to the full, natural, free development of human potentialities. The evils of society could be abolished, it was argued, by a return to the rationally ordered life of the natural man and the overthrow of unnatural or unreasonable

conventions and institutions, whether social or economic, throne or altar. Hence the men of the Enlightenment became critics of the *status quo*, breakers of idols, and disciples of progress, professing and practicing humanitarian principles. Doing good to one's fellow man became a satisfactory substitute for an unreasoned worship (or idolatry, as they called it) of God. A religion of practical morality based on rational principles replaced a worship by adoration of a deity resting on faith or authority. "The most acceptable service of God," said Franklin, "is doing good to man." Thus it came to pass that while the Enlightenment sanctioned "a radical attack on ancient wrongs," it also sanctioned a program that had special American connotations—"the ideal of a larger, more satisfactory life for the common man." Franklin, standing squarely in this tradition of the Enlightenment, illustrates its manifold program in (1) his satirical attack on irrational and traditional policies and institutions, (2) his practical humanitarianism, (3) his absorbing interest in scientific inquiries and philosophical liberalism, and (4) his rational and prudential moralism.

Franklin's ethical system is based on human reason and prudential wisdom rather than on religious authority or transcendental duty. The thirteen virtues, as set down in the *Autobiography*, in which he schooled himself, include only four—Temperance, Sincerity, Justice, and Humility—that derive purely or largely from a love of righteousness for its own sake. The other nine must be referred to more worldly considerations—either his love for a systematic and industrious conduct of business or his passion for living on good terms with his fellow men. There was for him no great difference between *moral* virtue and *prudential* wisdom. His form of morality based on rational conduct left far more freedom for the desires of the natural man than did the older systems based on revealed religion. All he desired was rational, temperate self-control, and he was not squeamish about the precise means best designed to achieve that end. The best expression of his practical morality appears in his two *Dialogues* between Philocles and Horatio, written to show that the proper object of conduct is a temperate pleasure. True pleasure, he pointed out, depends upon the conscious choice of what is moral or right, and right is determined by the human reason studying "the Sacred Book of Nature."

It is in connection with his desire to teach his lessons of prudential morality to the common man of his day that we come (after his earlier *Dogood* and *Busy-Body* papers) upon the first significant work



of Franklin the writer, or man of letters. Himself a self-made man and a disciple of economic individualism, he was firm in his faith that what was most needed by his clientele of mainly middle-class readers was practical advice on how to develop economic independence in terms of moral integrity and prudential wisdom. Accordingly he set about instructing his fellow men on these heads in *Poor Richard's Almanac*, which circulated annually many thousand copies. Poor Richard, or Richard Saunders, became the purveyor of the sugar-coated pills of pointed jest, witty sayings, popular saws, and prudential precepts which Franklin inserted wherever there was a bit of space in the calendar not filled with other matter. *Poor Richard's Almanac* thus became, during the years from 1732 to 1757, a miscellany of both useful and entertaining knowledge, liberally besprinkled with the sayings of Poor Richard—some new, some old. In 1757 Franklin very cleverly wove these pungent epigrams and proverbial gems into a connected essay, called *The Way to Wealth*. Among typical ones are the following: "Keep your eyes wide open before marriage, half shut afterwards." "He that can have patience can have what he will." "Three may keep a secret if two of them are dead." "God heals, the doctor takes the fee." "Plough deep while sluggards sleep, and you shall have corn to sell and to keep." "Many a little makes a mickle." "Beware of little expenses, for a small leak will sink a great ship." "It is hard for an empty sack to stand upright." "Get all you can, and what you get, hold." "Diligence is the mother of good luck." "God helps them that help themselves." "Dost thou love life, then do not squander time, for that's the stuff life is made of." "The sleeping fox catches no poultry." "There will be sleeping enough in the grave."

*The Way to Wealth* emphasized individual enterprise in a way that appealed to people just embarking on the exciting adventure of exploiting the vast resources of a new land. The industrial revolution, a machine age, and the complexities of modern urban life had not yet cast any doubts upon the faith that a man's future could be assured by the labor of his own hands. Franklin's *Way to Wealth* put in trenchant words what thousands of Americans were thinking, and to the many others who had not yet advanced to grasp this ideal of American self-sufficiency and self-reliance, Poor Richard became an inspired and revered tutor. The tremendous effect of his philosophy of thrift, industry, and prudence on a young nation during its period of tutelage can hardly be overestimated. Nor was its influence confined to America. By the beginning of the current century

*The Way to Wealth* had gone through seventy-five editions in English, fifty-six in French, eleven in German, and nine in Italian; was translated also into Spanish, Danish, Swedish, Welsh, Polish, Gaelic, Russian, Bohemian, Dutch, Catalan, Chinese, and modern Greek; and was put into phonetic writing and into Braille. It has been printed at least five hundred times and is today as popular as ever.

Although Franklin never thought of himself as a literary man, in the course of his long career as publisher, statesman, publicist, and diplomat, he tossed off either as by-products or as calculated means to some immediate and practical end hundreds of pamphlets, reports, proposals, articles, essays, letters, dialogues, dissertations, allegories, apologies, fables, and bagatelles, besides lampoons and burlesques, emblems and epigrams. Of them all, his *Autobiography* is the most important single document entitling him to a place of prominence as a writer of *belles-lettres*. A classic of its kind, reaching "virtual perfection in graceful clarity of style," it merits the popularity which it enjoys the world over as a purely literary work. But even it was written, so he declared, less at his own instance than at the ceaseless importunities of friends and strangers, so that he determined it would be a saving of time and energy to himself if he wrote his life down in simple terms that all might read rather than to answer all individual persons who desired information about him, or to give reasons and detail excuses to all and sundry explaining why he had not written his autobiography. Begun in 1771 and added to from time to time until 1789, the *Autobiography* remained incomplete at his death, tracing his life to 1757 only. Remarkable as it is for clarity, it leaves out much of importance even for this first half of his life, before he entered upon the most successful and celebrated part of his career, so that it must be supplemented by others of his numerous writings before anything like a full-bodied picture of the many-sided Franklin emerges. Aside from its stylistic excellence and the great importance of the subject itself, the book is notable for its near approach to true autobiography—its numerous "little, nameless, unremembered" but nonetheless authentic and influential episodes of life, and especially its accuracy and fidelity. He is not the successful man intent on covering up those acts of his that in retrospect he would rather have left undone or those episodes that he preferred neither to remember nor to perpetuate for the delectation of posterity. Franklin blinked none of these unpleasant aspects of his life, but set down with frank fidelity his major "errata" as well as his lesser vices, not neglecting to point out that, his pro-



gram of self-discipline notwithstanding, he was often disorderly and unmethodical, not always scrupulous in his business, and sometimes overindulgent and immoral. But through it all appears the portrait of a man that is authentic because it is stripped of all pretense and defense, and a character who is lovable because he is human. It cannot be said of Franklin, as it can of Mark Twain, who tried equally hard to write true autobiography, that he "never came within shouting distance of self-revelation."

At the beginning of his long career as an occasional essayist Franklin wrote the fourteen *Dogood* papers which he printed anonymously in his brother's *New-England Courant* during 1722. The six numbers of *The Busy-Body* papers that he wrote in Philadelphia during 1729 are in all essentials a continuation. From time to time he wrote other informal essays, dialogues, and other forms of polite discourse dealing playfully with the vices and follies of men, but, as he grew in age and influence he turned more and more to serious ethical and religious matters, aspects of current political and economic issues, scientific and philosophical investigations, the treatment of Indians and Negroes, colonial defense and military preparedness, forms of government (colonial and intercolonial), and the relations of the colonies to the mother country and to the other European nations. Never ambitious to build for himself a literary reputation, he took no care of his writings, and usually sent them forth to take their chances without so much as affixing his name. When Lord Kames asked him for copies of all his writings, he had to say that he had not kept copies, but would see what could be collected from among his friends. He allowed even his scientific and philosophical opinions to shift for themselves; and once, when his invention of the lightning rod was attacked in print, and friends urged him to publish a rejoinder, he said, "I have never entered into any controversy in defence of my philosophical opinions, I leave them to take their chance in the world. If they are *right*, truth and experience will support them; if *wrong*, they ought to be refuted and rejected. Disputes are apt to sour one's temper and disturb one's quiet. I have no private interest in the reception of my inventions by the world, having never made, nor proposed to make the least profit by any of them." Believing that "there never was a good War, or a bad Peace," he preferred peace to disputation, and his usual manner, when dealing with controversial matters, as he explained in the *Autobiography*, was to say "I conceive," "I apprehend," "I imagine," or "It so appears to me at present" rather than "I declare" or "I assert." Often

he was strongly provoked to take a less deferential line of attack, but he persevered in his resolution, while admitting:

. . . this mode, which I at first put on with some violence to my natural inclination, became at length so easy, and so habitual, that perhaps for these fifty years no one has ever heard a dogmatical expression escape me. And to this habit (after my character of integrity) I think it principally owing that I had early so much weight with my fellow-citizens when I proposed new institutions, or alterations in the old, and so much influence in public councils when I was a member; for I was but a bad speaker, never eloquent, subject to much hesitation in my choice of words, hardly correct in language, and yet I generally carried my points.

But if Franklin took little care of his writings, his friends did it for him. Thus it happened that the reports of his electrical experiments first came to be published, not at his own instigation, but because a correspondent to whom he had communicated his findings, published them in London, without Franklin's knowledge, in 1751 under the title *Experiments and Observations on Electricity, made at Philadelphia in America, by Mr. Benjamin Franklin, and Communicated in Several Letters to Mr. P. Collinson, of London, F. R. S.* This booklet was enlarged in 1752 and again in 1754, and was soon many times republished, in English, Latin, French, German, Dutch, Italian, and other languages. His fame spread, and among common folk in Europe he came to be regarded as a kind of arch-magician, whose renown as an electrician threw an exaggerated and somewhat weird light upon his accomplishments and prestige as a statesman. The vision was made complete by pictures circulated throughout Europe and America showing him seated in an arm chair, with flashes of lightning playing about his head, while underneath appeared a subscription to the effect that he had "seized the lightning from heaven and snatched the sceptre from tyrants." Even the hard-fisted Dr. Johnson professed to believe Franklin the "master-mischief, who has taught his countrymen how to put in motion the engine of political electricity . . . and to give the great stroke by the name of Boston," while lesser people felt that things in the British colonies were well enough were it not for Dr. Franklin, who had, "with a brand lighted from the clouds, set fire to all America."

His stature as an economist and political thinker is revealed in his numerous pamphlets and dissertations in these areas. Ordinarily they are done in a straightforward, expository style of argumentation, a manner calculated to add little to his literary renown. But there are exceptions, notably when he employed

satire to subserve his political and diplomatic purposes. Like Swift, he enjoyed the practical joke done with a straight face, especially if it could be made to carry a pointed allegory. He scored several highly successful hits in this Swiftian technique of ridiculing an opponent's position by pretending to support it but managing so subtly to distort it as to render it absurd or foolish. For the reception of the first of these successes the ground had been prepared by his admirable *Examination of Dr. Benjamin Franklin in the British House of Commons relative to the Repeal of the Stamp Act* (London, 1766). Its tact, good humor, and lucidity recommended it to many Englishmen as the most informative document of the day, and succeeding straightforward pleadings of the American cause in other pamphlets heightened the impression that Franklin was a reliable reporter. At the psychological moment he published in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for September, 1773, his *Rules for Reducing a Great Empire to a Small One*. His readers were prompt to see the parallelism between his "rules" and British colonial "policies," and many Englishmen were won over to the colonial point of view. The next month he published, in the same magazine, his *Edict of the King of Prussia*, and had himself the great good fortune to see how some of his British friends were taken in by the hoax which represented the King of Prussia, as patron to Britain, adopting the same tone in his edict toward England that the British were employing in their pronouncements toward the American colonies. His satirical letter in 1777 "From the Count De Schaumbergh to the Baron Hohendorf" on the sale of Hessian troops used during the Revolutionary War was hardly less effective; and even in the last year of his life, while serving as president of the Pennsylvania Society for the Abolition of Slavery, he employed this technique with telling effect. In the last piece of writing published during his lifetime he represented one Sidi Mehemet Ibrahim, a member of the Tripolitan divan and a professing African Moham-medan, defending the practice of enslaving Christians, by employing all the arguments current among American defenders of the Negro slave trade—with the notable difference that they were used by the heathens against Christians.

Finally, it remains to mention the most delightful of Franklin's miscellaneous and more trifling writings as an eighteenth-century wit and accomplished man of the world, as typified by his ephemera-like "Bagatelles." Most of these graceful letters and familiar essays, varying from the light, urbane meditations of a *bon vivant* to the clever gallantry of a courtier,

were written during his years at Passy for the diversion of his French friends. These "Bagatelles," as he called them, reflect the French elegance of the *salons* of Madame Brillon and Madame Helvétius. Among the best known of these trifles is "The Whistle," a moralized anecdote, and the most graceful is "The Ephemera," a parable on the brevity of life. As Stuart Pratt Sherman has remarked, the tallow chandler's son who entered on the cycle of his development by cultivating thrift with Defoe, continued it by cultivating tolerance and philanthropy with Voltaire, and completed it by cultivating "the graces" with Lord Chesterfield. Franklin himself was aware of this remarkable progression, resulting largely from his long residence abroad; for it is a noteworthy fact that he spent practically the whole of the Revolutionary War period away from America in the diplomatic and political interests of his country. Writing home in his seventy-second year, he said, "Figure to yourself an old man, with gray hair appearing under a marten fur cap, among the powdered heads of Paris. It is this odd figure that salutes you with handfuls of blessings."

Yet, extensive as were his education and experience, his mind was focused on "useful attainments." He had little of what is called poetry in his soul. His writings, filling ten stout volumes, contain few references to the theater, fiction, music, painting, sculpture, or architecture. He does not instinctively resort for the illustrations of his writings to the illuminating facts of history; he seldom explores the broader reaches of philosophy; only occasionally does he touch upon the wider and larger implications of science. As Sainte-Beuve once observed, "There is a flower of religion, a flower of honor, a flower of chivalry, that you must not require of Franklin." One needs to go no further than to compare him with his townsman Francis Hopkinson or his compatriot Thomas Jefferson to realize how relatively limited he was in point of cultural variety. Throughout his life he sought for and won other, simpler, and more substantial goals, which, at least according to his way of thinking, were equally honorable. Yet in dedicating his life to the service of his fellow men, he achieved, more or less incidentally, certain priorities at which he had not aimed at all, but which posterity gratefully acknowledges. He was the first to offer "a widely influential challenge to the religious life by the secular life," in the sense that he is the first important American writer to break with Puritanism; he was the "first genuinely international figure" to emerge in America; and he was the first American to achieve "solid permanence in literary fame."

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## FROM THE

*Autobiography*<sup>1</sup>

Twyford,<sup>2</sup> at the Bishop of St. Asaph's, 1771.

Dear Son, I have ever had a Pleasure in obtaining  
 any little Anecdotes of my Ancestors. You may re-

<sup>1</sup> The text of Franklin's *Autobiography* remains in a poor con-  
 dition, owing in part to Franklin's manner of writing it at four  
 different periods and his making several drafts, but chiefly to the  
 inaccuracy of the transcriptions made by John Bigelow and other  
 editors, as well as to the confusion created by the appearance of  
 several translations, chiefly in French, reputedly from authentic  
 manuscripts. The *Autobiography* first appeared in print in a  
 French translation, presumably made by Dr. Jacques Gibelin,  
 Paris, 1791. This was followed by several English translations  
 of the French translation. John Bigelow's edition, *Autobiography  
 of Benjamin Franklin. Edited from his Manuscript, with Notes*

member the Enquiries I made among the Remains  
 of my Relations when you were with me in England;  
 and the journey I undertook for that purpose. Now  
 imagining it may be equally agreeable to you to know  
 the Circumstances of my Life, many of which you are

and an Introduction, appeared in Philadelphia, in 1868. His  
 introduction contains a "Historical Sketch of the Fortunes and  
 Misfortunes of the Autograph Manuscript of Franklin's Memoirs  
 of His Own Life" that is indicative of the difficulties involved in  
 the establishment of a definitive text. The text used follows the  
 holograph in the Henry E. Huntington Library, San Marino,  
 California.

<sup>2</sup> The country house of Jonathan Shipley (1714-1788) near  
 Winchester, England. Shipley, Bishop of St. Asaph since 1769,  
 was a follower of Burke and a champion of colonial rights.

yet unacquainted with; and expecting a Weeks uninterrupted Leisure in my present Country Retirement, I sit down to write them for you. To which I have besides some other Inducements. Having emerg'd from the Poverty and Obscurity in which I was born and bred, to a State of Affluence and some Degree of Reputation in the World, and having gone so far thro' Life with a considerable Share of Felicity, the conducing Means I made use of, which, with the Blessing of God, so well succeeded, my Posterity may like to know, as they may find some of them suitable to their own Situations, and therefore fit to be imitated. That Felicity, when I reflected on it, has induc'd me sometimes to say, that were it offer'd to my Choice, I should have no Objection to a Repetition of the same Life from its Beginning, only asking the Advantages Authors have in a second Edition to correct some Faults of the first. So would I if I might, besides corr[ecting] the Faults, change some sinister Accidents and Events of it for others more favourable, but tho' this were deny'd, I should still accept the Offer. However, since such a Repetition is not to be expected, the next Thing most like living one's Life over again, seems to be a *Recollection* of that Life; and to make that Recollection as durable as possible, the putting it down in Writing. Hereby, too, I shall indulge the Inclination so natural in old Men, to be talking of themselves and their own past Actions, and I shall indulge it, without being troublesome to others who thro' respect to Age might think themselves oblig'd to give me a Hearing, since this may be read or not as any one pleases. And lastly (I may as well confess it, since my Denial of it will be believ'd by no Body) perhaps I shall a good deal gratify my own *Vanity*. Indeed I scarce ever heard or saw the introductory Words, *Without vanity I may say*, &c but some vain thing immediately follow'd. Most People dislike Vanity in others whatever share they have of it themselves, but I give it fair Quarter wherever I meet with it, being persuaded that it is often productive of Good to the Possessor and to others that are within his Sphere of Action: And therefore in many Cases it would not be quite absurd if a Man were to thank God for his Vanity among the other Comforts of Life. . . .

*[(Franklin's account of his ancestry is omitted. Further omissions are indicated in brackets.)]*

Josiah, my father, married young, and carried his Wife with three Children into New England, about

1682. The Conventicles<sup>3</sup> having been forbidden by Law, and frequently disturbed, induced some considerable Men of his Acquaintance to remove to that Country, and he was prevail'd with to accompany them thither, where they expected to enjoy their Mode of Religion with Freedom.—By the same Wife he had 4 Children more born there, and by a second wife ten more, in all 17, of which I remember 13 sitting at one time at his Table, who all grew up to be Men and Women, and married. I was the youngest Son, and the youngest Child but two, and was born in Boston, N. England. My mother, the 2<sup>d</sup> wife was Abiah Folger, a daughter of Peter Folger, one of the first Settlers of New England, of whom honourable mention is made by Cotton Mather, in his Church History of that Country, (entitled *Magnalia Christi Americana*) as *a godly learned Englishman*, if I remember the Words rightly. I have heard that he wrote sundry small occasional Pieces, but only one of them was printed which I saw now many years since. It was written in 1675, in the home-spun Verse of that Time and People, and address'd to those then concern'd in the Government there. It was in favour of Liberty of Conscience, and in behalf of the Baptists, Quakers, and other Sectaries, that had been under Persecution; ascribing the Indian Wars and other Distresses, that had befallen the Country to that Persecution, as so many Judgments of God, to punish so heinous an Offense; and exhorting a Repeal of those uncharitable Laws. The whole appear'd to me as written with a good deal of Decent Plainness and manly Freedom. The six last concluding Lines I remember, tho' I have forgotten the two first of the Stanza, but the Purport of them was that his Censures proceeded from Good will, and therefore he would be known as the Author,

Because to be a Libeller, (says he)  
I hate it with my Heart.  
From Sherburne Town<sup>4</sup> where now I dwell,  
My Name I do put here,  
Without Offense, your real Friend,  
It is Peter Folger

My elder Brothers were all put Apprentices to different Trades. I was put to the Grammar School at Eight Years of Age, my Father intending to devote me as the Tithe of his Sons to the Service of

<sup>3</sup> Conventicles were secret, sometimes illegal, assemblies for religious worship.

<sup>4</sup> Sherborn, Mass.

the Church. My early Readiness in learning to read (which must have been very early, as I do not remember when I could not read) and the Opinion of all his Friends that I should certainly make a good Scholar, encourag'd him in this Purpose of his. My Uncle Benjamin<sup>s</sup> too approv'd of it, and propos'd to give me all his Shorthand Volumes of Sermons I suppose as a Stock to set up with, if I would learn his Character. I continu'd however at the Grammar School not quite one Year, tho' in that time I<sup>10</sup> had risen gradually from the Middle of the Class of that Year to be the Head of it, and farther was remov'd into the next Class above it, in order to go with that into the third at the End of the Year. But my Father in the mean time, from a View of the Expence of a College Education which, having so large a Family, he could not well afford, and the mean Living many so educated were afterwards able to obtain, Reasons that he gave to his Friends in my Hearing, altered his first Intention, took me from<sup>20</sup> the Grammar School, and sent me to a School for Writing and Arithmetic kept by a then famous Man, Mr. Geo. Brownell, very successful in his Profession generally, and that by mild encouraging Methods. Under him I acquired fair Writing pretty soon, but I fail'd in the Arithmetic, and made no Progress in it. At Ten Years old, I was taken home to assist my Father in his Business, which was that of a Tallow Chandler and Sope Boiler. A Business he was not bred to, but had assumed on his Arrival in New<sup>30</sup> England and on finding his Dying Trade would not maintain his Family, being in little Request. Accordingly I was employed in cutting Wick for the Candles, filling the Dipping Mold, and the Molds for cast Candles, attending the Shop, going of Errands, etc.—I dislik'd the Trade and had a strong Inclination for the Sea; but my Father declar'd against it; however, living near the Water, I was much in and about it, learnt early to swim well, and to manage Boats, and when in a Boat or Canoe with other Boys<sup>40</sup> I was commonly allow'd to govern, especially in any case of Difficulty; and upon other Occasions I was generally a Leader among the Boys, and sometimes led them into Scrapes, of w<sup>ch</sup> I will mention one Instance, as it shows an early projecting public Spirit, tho' not then justly conducted. There was a salt Marsh that bounded part of the Mill Pond, on the edge of which at Highwater, we us'd to stand to fish

<sup>s</sup> A silk-dyer in London who invented a system of shorthand.

for Min[n]ows. By much Trampling, we had made it a mere Quagmire. My Proposal was to build a Wharf there fit for us to stand upon, and I show'd my Comrades a large Heap of Stones which were intended for a new House near the Marsh, and which would very well suit our Purpose. Accordingly in the Ev'ning when the Workmen were gone, I assembled a Number of my Playfellows; and working with them diligently like so many Emmets, sometimes two or three to a Stone, we brought them all away and built our little Wharff.—The next Morning the Workmen were surpriz'd at Missing the Stones; which were found in our Wharff; Enquiry was made after the Removers; we were discovered and complain'd of; several of us were corrected by our Fathers; and tho' I pleaded the Usefulness of the Work, mine convinc'd me that nothing was useful which was not honest. . . .

[Characterization of Franklin's father and mother is omitted.]

. . . I continu'd . . . employ'd in my Father's Business for two Years, that, till I was 12 Years old; and my Brother John, who was bred to that Business having left my Father, married and set up for himself at Rhodeisland, there was all Appearance that I was destin'd to supply his Place and be a Tallow Chandler. But my Dislike to the Trade continuing, my Father was under Apprehensions that if he did not find one for me more agreeable, I should break away and get to Sea, as his Son Josiah had done to his great Vexation. He therefore sometimes took me to walk with him, and see Joiners, Bricklayers, Turners, Braziers, etc. at their Work, that he might observe my Inclination, and endeavour to fix it on some Trade or other on Land. It has ever since been a Pleasure to me to see good Workmen handle their Tools; and it has been useful to me, having learnt so much by it, as to be able to do little Jobs myself in my House, when a Workman could not readily be got; and to construct little Machines for my Experiments while the Intention of making the Experiment was fresh and warm in my Mind. My Father at last fix'd upon the Cutler's Trade, and my Uncle Benjamin's Son Samuel who was bred to that Business in London[,] being about that time establish'd in Boston, I was sent to be with him some time on liking. But his Expectations of a Fee with me displeasing my Father, I was taken home again.—

From a Child I was fond of Reading, and all the little Money that came into my Hands was ever laid out in Books. Pleas'd with the Pilgrim's Progress, my first Collection was of John Bunyan's Works, in separate little Volumes. I afterwards sold them to enable me to buy R. Burton's Historical Collections; they were small Chapmen's Books and cheap, 40 or 50 in all.—My Father's little Library consisted chiefly of Books in polemic Divinity, most of which I read, and have since often regretted, that at a time when I 10 had such a Thirst for Knowledge, more proper Books had not fallen in my Way, since it was now resolv'd I should not be a Clergyman. Plutarch's Lives there was in which I read abundantly, and I still think that time spent to great[?] Advantage. There was also a Book of Defoc's, called an Essay on Projects, and another of Dr. Mather's, called Essays to do Good which perhaps gave me a Turn of thinking that had an influence on some of the principal future Events of my Life.

This Bookish inclination at length determin'd my Father to make me a Printer, tho' he had already one Son (James) of that Profession. In 1717 my Brother James return'd from England with a Press and Letters to set up his Business in Boston. I lik'd it much better than that of my Father, but still had a Hankering for the Sea.—To prevent the apprehended effect of such an Inclination, my Father was impatient to have me bound to my Brother. I stood out some time, but at last was persuaded and signed the Indentures, 30 when I was yet but 12 Years old.—I was to serve as an Apprentice till I was 21 Years of Age, only I was to be allow'd Journeyman's Wages during the last Year. In a little time I made great Proficiency in the Business, and became a useful Hand to my Brother. I now had Access to better Books. An Acquaintance with the Apprentices of Booksellers, enabled me sometimes to borrow a small one, which I was careful to return soon and clean. Often I sat up in my Room reading the greatest Part of the Night, when the 40 Book was borrow'd in the Evening and to be return'd early in the Morning[,] lest it should be miss'd or wanted. And after some time an ingenious Tradesman Mr. Matthew Adams who had a pretty Collection of Books, and who frequented our Printing House, took Notice of me, invited me to his Library, and very kindly lent me such Books as I chose to read. I now took a Fancy to Poetry. and made some little Pieces. My Brother, thinking it might turn to account encourag'd me, and put me on composing two occasional Ballads. One was called The *Lighthouse Tragedy*, and contained an Acc<sup>t</sup> of the drowning of Capt. Worthlake with his Two Daughters; the other was a Sailor Song on the Taking of *Teach* or Blackbeard the Pirate. They were wretched Stuff, in the Grub-street Ballad Stile, and when they were printed he sent me about the Town to sell them. The first sold wonderfully, the Event being recent, having made a great Noise. This flatter'd my Vanity. But my Father discourag'd me, by ridiculing my Performances, and telling me Verse-makers were generally Beggars; so I escap'd being a Poet, most probably a very bad one. But as Prose Writing has been of great Use to me in the Course of my Life, and was a principal Means of my Advancement, I shall tell you how in such a Situation I acquir'd what little Ability I have in that Way.

There was another Bookish Lad in the Town, John 20 Collins by Name, with whom I was intimately acquainted. We sometimes disputed, and very fond we were of Argument, and very desirous of confuting one another. Which disputacious Turn, by the way, is apt to become a very bad Habit, making People often extremely disagreeable in Company, by the Contradiction that is necessary to bring it into Practice, and thence, besides souring and spoiling the Conversation, is productive of Disgusts and perhaps Enmities where you may have occasion for Friendship. I had caught it by reading my Father's Books of Dispute about Religion. Persons of good Sense, I have since observ'd, seldom fall into it, except Lawyers, University Men, and Men of all Sorts that have been bred at Edinborough. A Question was once some how or other started between Collins and me, of the Propriety of educating the Female Sex in Learning, and their Abilities for Study. He was of Opinion that it was improper, and that they were naturally unequal to it. I took the contrary Side, perhaps a little for Dispute[']s sake. He was naturally more eloquent, had a ready Plenty of Words, and sometimes as I thought bore me down more by his Fluency than by the Strength of his Reasons. As we parted without settling the Point, and were not to see one another again for some time, I sat down to put my Arguments in Writing, which I copied fair and sent to him. He answer'd and I reply'd. Three of [or] four Letters of a Side had pass'd, when my Father happen'd to find my Papers, and read them.

Without ent'ring into the Discussion, he took occasion to talk to me about the Manner of my Writing, observ'd that tho' I had the Advantage of my Antagonist in correct Spelling and pointing (which I ow'd to the Printing House) I fell far short in elegance of Expression, in Method and in Perspicuity, of which he convinc'd me by several Instances. I saw the Justice of his Remarks, and thence grew more attentive to the *Manner* in writing, and determin'd to endeavour at Improvement.—

About this time I met with an odd Volume of the Spectator. It was the Third. I had never before seen any of them. I bought it, read it over and over, and was much delighted with it. I thought the Writing excellent, and wish'd if possible to imitate it. With that View, I took some of the Papers, and making short Hints of the Sentiment in each Sentence, laid them by a few Days, and then without looking at the Book, try'd to compleat the Papers again, by expressing each hinted Sentiment at length, and as fully as it had been express'd before, in any suitable Words, that should come to hand.

Then I compar'd my Spectator with the Original, discover'd some of my Faults and corrected them. But I found I wanted a Stock of Words or a Readiness in recollecting and using them, which I thought I should have acquir'd before that time, if I had gone on making Verses, since the continual Occasion for Words of the same Import but of different Length, to suit the Measure, or of different Sound for the Rhyme, would have laid me under a constant Necessity of searching for Variety, and also have tended to fix that Variety in my Mind, and make me Master of it. Therefore I took some of the Tales and turn'd them into Verse: And after a time, when I had pretty well forgotten the Prose, turn'd them back again. I also sometimes jumbled my Collections of Hints into Confusion, and after some Weeks, endeavour'd to reduce them into the best Order, before I began to form the full Sentences, and compleat the Paper. This was to teach me Method in the Arrangement of Thoughts. By comparing my work afterwards with the original, I discover'd many faults and amended them; but I sometimes had the Pleasure of Fancying that in certain Particulars of small Import, I had been lucky enough to improve the Method or the Language and this encourag'd me to think I might possibly in time come to be a tolerable English Writer, of which I was extremely ambitious.

My Time for these Exercises and for Reading, was at Night, after Work or before it began in the Morning; or on Sundays, when I contrived to be in the Printing House alone, evading as much as I could the common Attendance on publick Worship, which my Father used to exact of me when I was under his Care: And which indeed I still thought a Duty; tho' I could not, as it seemed to me, afford the Time to practise it.

10 When about 16 Years of Age, I happen'd to meet with a Book, written by one Tryon,<sup>6</sup> recommending a Vegetable Diet. I determin'd to go into it. My Brother being yet unmarried, did not keep House, but boarded himself and his Apprentices in another Family. My refusing to eat Flesh occasioned an Inconveniency, and I was frequently chid for my singularity. I made myself acquainted with Tryon's Manner of preparing some of his Dishes, such as Boiling Potatoes or Rice, making Hasty Pudding, and a few others, and then propos'd to my Brother, that if he would give me Weekly half the Money he paid for my Board I would board myself. He instantly agreed to it, and I presently found that I could save half what he paid me. This was an additional Fund for buying Books. But I had another Advantage in it. My Brother and the rest going from the Printing House to their Meals, I remain'd there alone, and dispatching presently my light Repast, (which often was no more than a Bisket or a Slice of Bread, a Handful of Raisins or a Tart from the Pastry Cook's, and a Glass of Water) had the rest of the Time till their Return, for Study, in which I made the greater Progress from that greater Clearness of Head and quicker Apprehension which usually attend Temperance in Eating and Drinking. And now it was that being on some Occasion made ashamed of my Ignorance in Figures, which I had twice failed in Learning when at School, I took Cocker's Book of Arithmetick, and went thro' the whole by myself with great Ease. I also read Seller's and Sturmy's Books of Navigation, and became acquainted with the little Geometry they contain, but never proceeded far in that Science,—And I read about this Time Locke on Human Understanding, and the art of Thinking by Mess<sup>rs</sup> du Port Royal.

While I was intent on improving my Language, I met with an English Grammar (I think it was Green-

<sup>6</sup> Thomas Tryon (1634–1705), author of *The Way to Health, Long Life and Happiness*.



wood's) at the End of which there were two little Sketches of the Arts of Rhetoric and Logic, the latter finishing with a Specimen of a Dispute in the Socratic Method. And soon after I procur'd Xenophon's Memorable Things of Socrates, wherein there are many Instances of the same Method. I was charm'd with it, adopted it, dropt my abrupt Contradiction, and positive Argumentation, and put on the humble Enquirer and Doubter. And being then, from reading Shaftsbury and Collins, become a real Doubter in many Points of our religious Doctrine, I found this Method safest for myself and very embarrassing to those against whom I us'd it, therefore I took a Delight in it, practis'd it continually and grew very artful and expert in drawing People even of superior Knowledge into Concessions the Consequences of which they did not foresee, entangling them in Difficulties out of which they could not extricate themselves, and so obtaining Victories that neither myself nor my Cause always deserved.—I continu'd this 20 Method some few years, but gradually left it, retaining only the Habit of expressing myself in Terms of modest Diffidence, never using when I advance any thing that may possibly be disputed, the Words, *Certainly, undoubtedly*; or any others that give the Air of Positiveness to an Opinion; but rather say, I conceive, or I apprehend a Thing to be so or so, It appears to me, or I should think it so or so for such and such Reasons, or I imagine it to be so, or it is so if I am not mistaken. This Habit I believe has been 30 of great Advantage to me, when I have had occasion to inculcate my Opinions and persuade Men into Measures that I have been from time to time engag'd in promoting.—And as the chief Ends of Conversation are to *inform*, or to be *informed*, to *please* or to *persuade*, I wish wellmeaning sensible Men would not lessen their Power of doing Good by a Positive assuming Manner that seldom fails to disgust, tends to create Opposition, and to defeat every one of those Purposes for which Speech was given us, to wit, 40 giving or receiving Information, or Pleasure: For if you would *inform*, a positive dogmatical Manner in advancing your Sentiments, may provoke Contradiction and prevent a candid Attention. If you wish Information and Improvement from the Knowledge of others and yet at the same time express yourself as firmly fix'd in your present Opinions, modest sensible Men, who do not love Disputation, will probably leave you undisturbed in the Possession of your

Error; and by such a Manner you can seldom hope to recommend yourself in *pleasing* your Hearers, or to persuade those whose Concurrence you desire. . . .

[More to the same effect, including quotations to enforce his point.]

My Brother had in 1720 or 21, begun to print a Newspaper. It was the second that appear'd in *America*, and was called *The New England Courant*.<sup>7</sup> The only one before it, was *the Boston News Letter*. I remember his being dissuaded by some of his Friends from the Undertaking, as not likely to succeed, one Newspaper being in their Judgment enough for America.—At this time 1771 there are not less than five and twenty.—He went on however with the Undertaking, and after having work'd in composing the Types and printing off the Sheets, I was employ'd to carry the Papers thro' the Streets to the Customers.—He had some ingenious Men among his Friends who amus'd themselves by writing little Picces for this Paper, which gain'd it Credit, and made it more in Demand; and these Gentlemen often visited us.—Hearing their Conversations, and their Accounts of the Approbation their Papers were receiv'd with, I was excited to try my Hand among them. But being still a Boy, and suspecting that my Bother would object to printing any Thing of mine in his Paper if he knew it to be mine, I contriv'd to disguise my Hand, and writing an anonymous Paper I put it in at Night under the Door of the Printing House. It was found in the Morning and communicated to his Writing Friends when they call'd in as usual. They read it, commented on it in my Hearing, and I had the exquisite Pleasure, of finding it met with their Approbation, and that in their different Guesses at the Author none were named but Men of some Character among us for Learning and Ingenuity.—I suppose now that I was rather lucky in my Judges: And that perhaps they were not really so very good ones as I then esteem'd them. Encourag'd however by this, I wrote and convey'd in the same Way to the Press several more Papers, which were equally approv'd, and I kept my Secret till my small Fund of Sense for such Performances was pretty well exhausted, and then I discovered it; when I began to be considered a little more by my Brother's Acquaintance, and in a

<sup>7</sup> The exact date is August 7, 1721. It was the fifth English colonial newspaper to be founded.



manner that did not quite please him, as he thought, probably with reason, that it tended to make me too vain. And perhaps this might be one Occasion of the Differences that we began to have about this Time. Tho' a Brother, he considered himself as my Master, and me as his Apprentice; and accordingly expected the same Services from me as he would from another; while I thought he demean'd me too much in some he requir'd of me, who from a Brother expected more Indulgence. Our Disputes were often brought before our Father, and I fancy I was either generally in the right, or else a better Pleader, because the Judgment was generally in my favour: But my Brother was passionate and had often beaten me, which I took extremely amiss; and thinking my Apprenticeship very tedious, I was continually wishing for some Opportunity of shortening it, which at length offered in a manner unexpected.\*

One of the Picces in our Newspaper, on some political Point which I have now forgotten, gave Offence to the Assembly. He was taken up, censur'd and imprison'd for a Month by the Speaker's Warrant, I suppose because he would not discover his Author. I too was taken up and examin'd before the Council; but tho' I did not give them any Satisfaction, they contented themselves with admonishing me, and dismiss'd me; considering me perhaps as an Apprentice who was bound to keep his Master's Secrets. During my Brother's Confinement, which I resented a good deal, notwithstanding our private Differences, I had the Management of the Paper, and I made bold to give our Rulers some Rubs in it, which my Brother took very kindly, while others began to consider me in an unfavourable Light, as a young Genius that had a Turn for Libelling and Satyr. My Brother's Discharge was accompany'd with an Order of the House, (a very odd one) *that James Franklin should no longer print the Paper called the New England Courant*. There was a Consultation held in our Printing House among his Friends what he should do in this Case. Some propos'd to evade the Order by changing the Name of the Paper; but my Brother seeing Inconveniences in that, it was finally concluded on as a better Way, to let it be printed for the future under the name of *Benjamin Franklin*. And to avoid the Censure of the Assembly

\* I fancy his harsh and tyrannical Treatment of me, might be a means of impressing me with that Aversion to arbitrary Power that has stuck to me thro' my whole life.

that might fall on him, as still printing it by his Apprentice, the Contrivance was, that my old Indenture should be return'd to me with a full Discharge on the Back of it, to be shown on Occasion; but to secure to him the Benefit of my Service I was to sign new Indentures for the Remainder of the Term, w<sup>ch</sup> were to be kept private. A very flimsy Scheme it was, but however it was immediately executed, and the Paper went on accordingly under my Name for several Months. At length a fresh Difference arising between my Brother and me, I took upon me to assert my Freedom, presuming that he would not venture to produce the new Indentures. It was not fair in me to take this Advantage, and this I therefore reckon one of the first Errata of my life: But the Unfairness of it weighed little with me, when under the Impressions of Resentment, for the Blows his Passion too often urg'd him to bestow upon me. Tho' he was otherwise not an ill-natur'd Man: Perhaps I was too saucy and provoking.

When he found I would leave him, he took care to prevent my getting Employment in any other Printing-House of the Town, by going round and speaking to every Master, who accordingly refus'd to give me Work. I then thought of going to New York as the nearest Place where there was a Printer: and I was the rather inclin'd to leave Boston, when I reflected that I had already made myself a little obnoxious to the governing Party; and from the arbitrary Proceedings of the Assembly in my Brother's Case it was likely I might if I stay'd soon bring myself into Scrapes; and farther that my indiscrete Disputations about Religion began to make me pointed at with Horror by good People, as an Infidel or Atheist. I determin'd on the Point: but my Father now siding with my Brother, I was sensible that if I attempted to go openly, Means would be used to prevent me. My Friend Collins therefore undertook to manage a little for me. He agreed with the Captain of a New York Sloop for my Passage, under the Notion of my being a young Acquaintance of his that had got a naughty Girl with Child, whose Friends would compel me to marry her, and therefore I could not appear or come away publickly. So I sold some of my Books to raise a little Money, Was taken on board privately, and as we had a fair Wind[,] in three Days I found myself in New York near 300 Miles from home, a Boy of but 17, without the least Recommendation to or Knowl-

edge of any Person in the Place, and with very little Money in my Pocket. . . .

*[(Failure to find work in New York; decision to proceed to Philadelphia; account of journey thither.)]*

I have been the more particular in this Description of my Journey, and shall be so of my first Entry into that City, that you may in your Mind compare such unlikely Beginnings with the Figure I have since made there. I was in my Working Dress, my best 10 Cloaths being to come round by Sea. I was dirty from my Journey; my Pockets were stuff'd out with Shirts and Stockings; I knew no Soul, nor where to look for Lodging. I was fatigued with Travelling, Rowing and Want of Rest. I was very hungry, and my whole Stock of Cash consisted of a Dutch Dollar and about a Shilling in Copper. The latter I gave the People of the Boat for my Passage, who at first refus'd it on Acc<sup>t</sup> of my Rowing; but I insisted on their taking it, a Man being sometimes more generous when he has 20 but a little Money than when he has plenty, perhaps thro' Fear of being thought to have but little. Then I walk'd up the Street, gazing about, till near the Market House I met a Boy with Bread. I had made many a Meal on Bread, and inquiring where he got it, I went immediately to the Baker's he directed me to in Second Street; and ask'd for Bisket, intending such as we had in Boston, but they it seems were not made in Philadelphia, then I ask'd for a threepenny Loaf, and was told they had none such: so not con- 30 sidering or knowing the Difference of Money and the greater Cheapness nor the Names of his Bread, I bad[e] him give me threepenny worth of any sort. He gave me accordingly three great Puffy Rolls. I was surpriz'd at the Quantity, but took it, and having no room in my Pockets, walk'd off, with a Roll under each Arm, and eating the other. Thus I went up Market Street as far as fourth Street, passing by the Door of Mr. Read, my future Wife's Father, when she standing at the Door saw me, and thought I made 40 as I certainly did a most awkward ridiculous Appearance. Then I turn'd and went down Chestnut Street and part of Walnut Street, eating my Roll all the Way, and coming round found myself again at Market Street Wharff, near the Boat I came in, to which I went for a Draught of the River Water, and being fill'd with one of my Rolls, gave the other two to a Woman and her Child that came down the River in the Boat with us and were waiting to go

farther. Thus refresh'd I walk'd again up the Street, which by this time had many clean dress'd People in it who were all walking the same Way; I join'd them, and thereby was led into the great Meeting House of the Quakers near the Market. I sat down among them, and after looking round awhile and hearing nothing said; being very drowsy thro' Labour and want of Rest the preceding Night, I fell fast asleep, and continu'd so till the Meeting broke up, when one was kind enough to rouse me. This was therefore the first House I was in or slept in, in Philadelphia.—

Walking again down towards the River, and looking in the Faces of People, I met a young Quaker Man whose Countenance I lik'd, and accosting him requested he would tell me where a Stranger could get Lodging. We were then near the Sign of the Three Mariners. Here, says he, is one Place that entertains Strangers, but it is not a reputable House; if thee wilt walk with me, I'll show thee a better. He brought me to the Crooked Billet in Water Street. Here I got a Dinner. And while I was eating it, several sly Questions were ask'd me, as it seem'd to be suspected from my youth and Appearance, that I might be some Runaway. After Dinner my Sleepiness return'd: and being shown to a Bed, I lay down without undressing, and slept till Six in the Evening; was call'd to Supper; went to Bed again very early and slept soundly till next Morning. Then I made myself as tidy as I could, and went to Andrew Bradford the Printer's. I found in the Shop the old Man his Father, whom I had seen at New York, and who travelling on horseback had got to Philadelphia before me. He introduc'd me to his Son, who receiv'd me civilly, gave me a Breakfast, but told me he did not at present want a Hand, being lately supply'd with one. But there was another Printer in town lately set up, one Keimer,<sup>8</sup> who perhaps might employ me; if not, I should be welcome to lodge at his House, and he would give me a little Work to do now and then till fuller Business should offer.

The old Gentleman said, he would go with me to the new Printer: And when we found him, Neighbor, says Bradford, I have brought to see you a young Man of your Business, perhaps you may want such a One. He ask'd me a few Questions, put a Composing Stick in my Hand to see how I work'd, and then said

<sup>8</sup> Samuel Keimer (1688–c. 1749), an eccentric and radical printer, who had emigrated to Philadelphia and set up his shop in 1721.

he would employ me soon, tho' he had just then nothing for me to do. And taking old Bradford whom he had never seen before, to be one of the Towns People that had a Good Will for him, enter'd into a Conversation on his present Undertaking and Prospects; while Bradford not discovering that he was the other Printer's Father, on Keimer's saying he expected soon to get the greatest Part of the Business into his own Hands, drew him on by artful Questions and starting little Doubts, to explain all his Views, 10 and what Interest he rely'd on, and in what manner he intended to proceed.—I who stood by and heard all, saw immediately that one of them was a crafty old Sophister, and the other a mere Novice. Bradford left me with Keimer, who was greatly surpriz'd when I told him who the old Man was.

Keimer's Printing House I found, consisted of an old shatter'd Press, and one small worn-out Fount of English, which he was then using himself, composing in it an Elegy on Aquila Rose<sup>9</sup> before-mentioned, an 20 ingenious young Man of excellent Character much respected in the Town, Clerk of the Assembly, and a pretty Poet. Keimer made Verses, too, but very indifferently. He could not be said to write them, for his Manner was to compose them in the Types directly out of his Head; so there being no Copy, but one Pair of Cases, and the Elegy likely to require all the Letter[s], no one could help him.—I endeavour'd to put his Press (which he had not yet us'd, and of which he understood nothing) into Order fit 30 to be work'd with; and promising to come and print off his Elegy as soon as he should have got it ready, I return'd to Bradford's who gave me a little Job to do for the present. [and] there I lodged and dieted. A few Days after[,] Keimer sent for me to print off the Elegy. And now he had got another Pair of Cases, and a Pamphlet to reprint, on which he set me to work.—

These two Printers I found poorly Qualified for their Business. Bradford had not been bred to it, and 40 was very illiterate; and Keimer tho' something of a Scholar, was a mere Compositor, knowing nothing of Presswork. He had been one of the French Prophets and could act their enthusiastic Agitations. At this time he did not profess any particular religion, but something of all on occasion; was very ignorant of the World, and had, as I afterward found, a good

deal of the Knave in his Composition. He did not like my Lodging at Bradford's while I work'd with him. He had a House indeed, but without Furniture, so he could not lodge me: But he got me a Lodging at Mr. Read's beforementioned, who was the Owner of his House. And my Chest and Clothes being come by this time, I made rather a more respectable Appearance in the Eyes of Miss Read than I had done when she first happen'd to see me eating my Roll in the Street.—

I began now to have some Acquaintance among the young People of the town, that were Lovers of Reading with whom I spent my Evenings very pleasantly and gaining Money by my Industry and Frugality, I lived very agreeably, forgetting Boston as much as I could, and not desiring that any there should know where I resided, except my Friend Collins who was in my Secret, and kept it when I wrote to him. At length an Incident happened that sent me back again much sooner than I had intended.—

I had a Brother-in-law, Robert Holmes, Master of a Sloop, that traded between Boston and Delaware. He being at New Castle<sup>10</sup> 40 Miles below Philadelphia, heard there of me, and wrote me a Letter, mentioning the Concern of my Friends in Boston at my abrupt Departure, assuring me of their Good will to me, and that every thing would be accommodated to my Mind if I would return, to which he exhorted me very earnestly. I wrote an Answer to his Letter, thank'd him for his Advice, but stated my Reasons for quitting Boston fully, and in such a Light as to convince him I was not so wrong as he had apprehended. Sir William Keith<sup>11</sup> Governor of the Province, was then at New Castle, and Capt. Holmes happening to be in Company with him when my Letter came to hand, spoke to him of me, and show'd him the Letter. The Governor read it, and seem'd surpriz'd when he was told my Age. He said I appear'd a young Man of promising Parts, and therefore should be encouraged: The Printers at Philadelphia were wretched ones, and if I would set up there, he made no doubt I should succeed; for his Part, he would procure me the publick Business, and do me every other Service in his Power. This my Brother-in-Law afterwards told me in Boston. But I knew as

<sup>9</sup> Aquila Rose (1695–1723), a poet, author of *Poems on Several Occasions*, Philadelphia, 1740.

<sup>10</sup> New Castle, Delaware.

<sup>11</sup> Sir William Keith (1680–1749), Governor of Pennsylvania, 1717–1726.

yet nothing of it; when one Day Keimer and I being at Work together near the Window, we saw the Governor and another Gentleman (which prov'd to be Col. French, of New Castle) finely dress'd, come directly across the Street to our House, and heard them at the Door. Keimer ran down immediately, thinking it a Visit to him. But the Governor enquir'd for me, came up, and with a Condescension and Politeness I had been quite unus'd to, made me many Compliments, desired to be acquainted with me, blam'd me kindly for not having made myself known to him when I first came to the Place, and would have me away with him to the Tavern where he was going with Col. French to taste as he said some excellent Madeira. I was not a little surpriz'd, and Keimer star'd like a Pig poison'd. I went however with the Governor and Col. French, to a Tavern [at] the Corner of Third Street, and over the Madeira he propos'd my Setting up my Business, laid before me the Probabilities of Success, and both he and Col. French, assur'd me I should have their Interest and Influence in procuring the Publick Business of both Governments. On my doubting whether my Father would assist me in it, Sir William said he would give me a Letter to him, in which he would state the Advantages, and he did not doubt of prevailing with him. So it was concluded I should return to Boston in the first Vessel with the Governor's Letter recommending me to my Father. In the mean time the Intention was to be kept secret, and I went on working with Keimer as usual, the Governor sending for me now and then to dine with him, a very great Honour I thought it, and conversing with me in the most affable, familiar, and friendly manner imaginable. About the End of April 1724 a little Vessel offer'd for Boston. I took leave of Keimer as going to see my Friends. The Governor gave me an ample Letter, saying many flattering things of me to my Father, and strongly recommending the Project of my setting up at Philadelphia, as a Thing that must make 40 my Fortune. . . .

*(Visit to Boston; failure to secure his father's consent and financial support for setting up in business on his own before attaining the age of twenty-one; return to Philadelphia.)*

. . . Sir William [Keith], on reading his <sup>12</sup> letter, said he was too prudent. There was a great Difference in Persons, and Discretion did not always accompany

<sup>12</sup> Franklin's father's.

Years, nor was Youth always without it. And since he will not set you up, says he, I will do it myself. Give me an Inventory of the Things necessary to be had from England, and I will send for them. You shall repay me when you are able; I am resolv'd to have a good Printer here, and I am sure you must succeed. This was spoken with such an Appearance of Cordiality, that I had not the least doubt of his meaning what he said. I had hitherto kept the Proposition of my Setting up[,] a Secret in Philadelphia, and I still kept it. Had it been known that I depended on the Governor, probably some Friend that knew him better would have advis'd me not to rely on him, as I afterwards heard it as his known Character to be liberal of Promises which he never meant to keep.—Yet unsolicited as he was by me, how could I think his generous Offers insincere? I believ'd him one of the best Men in the World.—

I presented him an Inventory of a little Print<sup>g</sup> House, amounting by my Computation to about 100£ Sterling. He lik'd it, but ask'd me if my being on the Spot in England to chuse the Types and see that every thing was good of the kind, might not be of some Advantage. Then, says he, when there, you may make Acquaintances and establish Correspondencies in the Bookselling and Stationary Way. I agreed that this might be advantageous. Then, says he, get yourself ready to go with Annis; which was the annual Ship, and the only one at that Time usually passing between London and Philadelphia. But it would be some Months before Annis sail'd, so I continu'd working with Keimer. . . .

I believe I have omitted mentioning that in my first Voyage from Boston, being becalm'd off Block Island, our People set about catching Cod and haul'd up a great many. Hitherto I had stuck to my Resolution of not eating animal Food; and on this Occasion, I consider'd with my Master Tryon, the taking every Fish as a kind of unprovoked Murder, since none of them had or ever could do us any Injury that might justify the Slaughter. All this seem'd very reasonable.—But I had formerly been a great Lover of Fish, and when this came hot out of the Frying Pan, it smelt admirably well. I balanc'd some time between Principle and Inclination: till I recollected, that when the Fish were opened, I saw smaller Fish taken out of their Stomachs: Then thought I, if you eat one another, I don't see why we mayn't eat you. So I din'd upon Cod very heartily and continu'd to

eat with other People, returning only now and then occasionally to a vegetable Diet. So convenient a thing it is to be a *reasonable Creature*, since it enables one to find or make a Reason for every thing one has a mind to do.

Keimer and I liv'd on a pretty good familiar Footing and agreed tolerably well: for he suspected nothing of my Setting up. He retain'd a great deal of his old Enthusiasms, and lov'd Argumentation. We therefore had many Disputations. I used to work with him so with my Socratic Method, and had trepann'd him so often by Questions apparently so distant from any Point we had in hand, and yet by degrees led to the Point, and brought him into Difficulties and Contradictions that at last he grew ridiculously cautious, and would hardly answer me the most common Question, without asking first, *What do you intend to infer from that?* However it gave him so high an Opinion of my Abilities in the Confuting Way, that he seriously propos'd my being his Colleague in a <sup>20</sup> Project he had of setting up a new Sect. He was to preach the Doctrines, and I was to confound all Opponents. When he came to explain with me upon the Doctrines, I found several Conundrums which I objected to, unless I might have my Way a little too, and introducc some of mine. Keimer wore his Beard at full Length, because somewhere in the Mosaic Law it is said, *thou shalt not mar the Corners of thy beard*. He likewise kept the seventh day Sabbath; and these two Points were Essentials with him. I dislik'd both, <sup>30</sup> but agreed to admit them upon Condition of his adopting the Doctrine of using no animal Food. I doubt, says he, my Constitution will not bear that. I assur'd him it would, and that he would be the better for it. He was usually a great Glutton, and I promis'd myself some Diversion in half-starving him. He agreed to try the Practice if I would keep him Company. I did so and we held it for three Months. We had our Victuals dress'd and brought to us regularly by a Woman in the Neighbourhood, who had <sup>40</sup> from me a List of 40 Dishes to be prepar'd for us at different times, in all which there was neither Fish Flesh nor Fowl, and the whim suited me the better at this time from the Cheapness of it, not costing us above 18<sup>d</sup> Sterling each, per Week. I have since kept several Lents most strictly, leaving the common Diet for that, and that for the common, abruptly, without the least Inconveniencce: So that I think there is little in the Advice of making those Changes by easy Gra-

dations. I went on pleasantly, but Poor Keimer suffer'd grievously, tir'd of the Project, long'd for the Flesh Pots of Egypt, and order'd a roast Pig. He invited me and two Women Friends to dinc with him, but it being brought too soon upon the table, he could not resist the Temptation, and ate it all up before we came.—

I had made some Courtship during this time to Miss Read. I had a great Respect and Affection for her, and had some Reason to believe she had the same for me: but as I was about to take a long Voyage, and we were both very young, only a little above 18, it was thought most prudent by her Mother to prevent our going too far at present, as a Marriage if it was to take place would be more convenient after my Return, when I should be as I expected set up in my Business. Perhaps too she thought my Expectations not so well founded as I imagined them to be. . . .

*[Account of his efforts, with his closest companions in Philadelphia—Charles Osborne, Joseph Watson, and James Ralph—to cultivate the arts of conversation and composition.]*

The Governor, seeming to like my Company, had me frequently to his House; and his Setting me up was always mention'd as a fix'd thing. I was to take with me Letters recommendatory to a Number of his Friends, besides the Letter of Credit to furnish me with the necessary Money for purchasing the Press and Types, Paper, etc. For these Letters I was appointed to call at different times, when they were to be ready, but a future time was still named.—Thus we went on till the Ship whose Departure too had been several times postponed was on the Point of sailing. Then when I call'd to take my Leave and receive the Letters, his Secretary, Dr. Bard, came out to me and said the Governor was extreamly busy, in writing, but would be down at Newcastle before the Ship, and there the Letters would be delivered to me. Ralph,<sup>13</sup> tho' married and having one Child, had determined to accompany me in this Voyage. It was thought he intended to establish a Correspondence, and obtain Goods to sell on Commission. But I found afterwards, that thro' some Discontent with his Wife's Relations, he purposed to leave her on their Hands, and never return again.—Having taken leave of my Friends, and interchang'd some Promises with

<sup>13</sup> James Ralph (c. 1705–1762), a minor poet, satirized by Pope in *The Dunciad*, III, 165–166.

Miss Read, I left Philadelphia in the Ship, which anchor'd at Newcastle. The Governor was there. But when I went to his Lodging, the Secretary came to me from him with the civillest Message in the World, that he could not then see me being engag'd in Business of the utmost Importance, but should send the Letters to me on board, wish'd me heartily a good Voyage and a speedy Return, etc. I return'd on board, a little puzzled, but still not doubting. . . .

¶[Account of voyage to London.]

When we came into the Channel, the Captain kept his Word with me, and gave me an Opportunity of examining the Bag for the Governor's Letters. I found none upon which my Name was put, as under my Care; I pick'd out 6 or 7 that by the Hand writing I thought might be the promis'd Letters, especially as one of them was directed to Basket the King's printer, and another to some Stationer. We arriv'd in London the 24<sup>th</sup> of December, 1724. I waited upon the Stationer who came first in my Way, delivering the Letter as from Gov. Keith. I don't know such a Person, says he: but opening the Letter, O, this is from Riddlesden; I have lately found him to be a compleat Rascal, and I will have nothing to do with him, nor receive any Letters from him. So putting the Letter into my Hand, he turn'd on his Heel and left me to serve some Customer. I was surprized to find these were not the Governor's Letters. And after recollecting and comparing Circumstances, I began to doubt his Sincerity.—I found my Friend Denham, 30 and opened the whole Affair to him. He let me into Keith's Character, told me there was not the least Probability that he had written any Letters for me, that no one who knew him had the smallest Dependence on him, and he laugh'd at the Notion of the Governor's giving me a Letter of Credit, having as he said no Credit to give.—On my expressing some Concern about what I should do: He advis'd me to endeavour getting some Employment in the Way of my Business. Among the Printers here, says he, you 40 will improve yourself; and when you return to America, you will set up to greater Advantage. . . .

¶[More to the same general effect.]

But what shall we think of a Governor's playing such pitiful Tricks, and imposing so grossly on a poor ignorant Boy! It was a Habit he had acquired. He wish'd to please every body; and, having little to

give, he gave Expectations. He was otherwise an ingenious sensible Man, a pretty good Writer, and a good Governor for the People, tho' not for his Constituents the Proprietaries, whose Instructions he sometimes disregarded.—Several of our best Laws were of his Planning, and pass'd during his Administration. . . .

¶[Brief account of his friend Ralph's unsuccessful efforts to find employment.]

10 I immediately got into Work at Palmer's then a famous Printing House in Bartholomew Close; and here I continu'd near a Year. I was pretty diligent; but spent with Ralph a good deal of my Earnings in going to Plays and other Places of Amusement. We had together consum'd all my Pistols, and now just rubb'd on from hand to mouth. He seem'd quite to forget his Wife and Child, and I by degrees my Engagements w<sup>th</sup> Miss Read, to whom I never wrote more than one Letter, and that was to let her know 20 I was not likely soon to return. This was another of the great Errata of my Life, which I should wish to correct if I were to live it over again.—In fact, by our Expences, I was constantly kept unable to pay my Passage.

At Palmer's I was employ'd in composing for the second Edition of Woollaston's [*sic*] Religion of Nature.<sup>14</sup> Some of his Reasonings not appearing to me well-founded, I wrote a little metaphysical Piece, in which I made Remarks on them. It was entitled, 30 *A Dissertation on Liberty and Necessity, Pleasure and pain*. I inscrib'd it to my Friend Ralph.—I printed a small Number. It occasion'd my being more consider'd by Mr. Palmer, as a young Man of some Ingenuity, tho' he seriously Expostulated with me upon the Principles of my Pamphlet which to him appear'd abominable. My printing this Pamphlet was another Erratum.

In our House there lodg'd a young Woman; a Millner, who I think had a Shop in the Cloisters. She had been genteely bred, was sensible and lively, and of most pleasing Conversation. Ralph read Plays to her in the Evnings, they grew intimate, she took another Lodging, and he follow'd her. They liv'd together some time, but he being still out of Business, and her Income not sufficient to maintain them with

<sup>14</sup> That is, William Woollaston's *The Religion of Nature Delineated* (1724), which established him as one of the foremost deists of his time.

her Child, he took a Resolution of going from London, to try for a Country School, which he thought himself well qualify'd to undertake, as he wrote an excellent Hand, and was a Master of Arithmetic and Accounts.—This however he deem'd a Business below him, and confident of future better Fortune when he should be unwilling to have it known that he once was so meanly employ'd, he chang'd his Name, and did me the Honour to assume mine.—For I soon after had a Letter from him, acquainting me, that he was settled in a small Village in Berkshire, I think it was, where he taught reading and writing to 10 or a dozen Boys at 6 pence each p[er] Week, recommending Mrs. T. to my Care, and desiring me to write to him directing for Mr. Franklin Schoolmaster at such a Place. He continu'd to write frequently, sending me large Specimens of an Epic Poem, which he was then composing, and desiring my Remarks and Corrections.—These I gave him from time to time, but endeavour'd rather to discourage his Proceeding. One of Young's Satires was then just publish'd. I copy'd and sent him a great Part of it, which set in a strong Light the Folly of pursuing the Muses with any Hope of Advancement by them. All was in vain. Sheets of the Poem continu'd to come by every Post. In the mean time Mrs. T. having on his Account lost her Friends and Business, was often in Distresses, and us'd to send for me, and borrow what I could spare to help her out of them. I grew fond of her Company, and being 30 at this time under no Religious Restraints, and presuming on my Importance to her, I attempted Familiarities, (another Erratum) which she repuls'd with a proper Resentment, and acquainted him with my Behaviour. This made a Breach between us, and when he return'd again to London, he let me know he thought I had cancell'd all the Obligations he had been under to me.—So I found I was never to expect his Repaying me what I lent to him or advanc'd for him. This was however not then of much Consequence, as he was totally unable: And in the Loss of his Friendship I found myself reliev'd from a Burthen. I now began to think of getting a little Money beforehand; and expecting better Work, I left Palmer's to work at Watts's near Lincoln's Inn Fields, a still greater Printing House. Here I continu'd all the rest of my Stay in London.

While I lodg'd in Little Britain I made an Acquaintance with one Wilcox a Bookseller, whose

Shop was at the next Door. He had an immense Collection of second-hand Books. Circulating Libraries were not then in Use; but we agreed that on certain reasonable Terms which I have now forgotten, I might take, read and return any of his Books. This I esteem'd a great Advantage, and I made as much use of it as I could.—

My Pamphlet by some means falling into the Hands of one Lyons, a Surgeon, Author of a Book intitled *The Infallibility of Human Judgment*, it occasioned an Acquaintance between us; he took great Notice of me, call'd on me often, to converse on those Subjects, carried me to the Horns a pale Alehouse in — Lane, Cheapside, and introduc'd me to Dr. Mandevill<sup>15</sup>, Author of the Fable of the Bees who had a Club there, of which he was the Soul, being a most facetious entertaining Companion. Lyons too introduc'd me to Dr. Pemberton,<sup>16</sup> at Batson's Coffee House, who promis'd to give me an Opportunity some time or other of seeing Sir Isaac Newton, of which I was extremely desirous; but this never happened.

I had brought over a few Curiosities among which the principal was a Purse made of the Asbestos, which purifies by Fire. Sir Hans Sloane heard of it, came to see me, and invited me to his House in Bloomsbury Square; where he show'd me all his Curiosities, and persuaded me to let him add that to the Number, for which he paid me handsomely.<sup>17</sup>

At my first Admission into this Printing House, I took to working at Press, imagining I felt a Want of the Bodily Exercise I had been us'd to in America, where Presswork is mix'd with Composing, I drank only Water; the other Workmen, near 50 in Number, were great Guzzlers of Beer. On occasion I carried up and down Stairs a large Form of Types in each hand, when others carried but one in both Hands. They wonder'd to see from this and several Instances that the water-American as they call'd me was stronger than themselves who drank strong beer. We had an Alehouse Boy who attended always in the House to supply the Workmen. My Companion at the Press, drank every day a Pint before Breakfast, a Pint at Breakfast with his Bread and Cheese; a Pint

<sup>15</sup> Bernard Mandeville (1670–1733), author of *The Fable of the Bees* (1714, 1729).

<sup>16</sup> Henry Pemberton (1694–1771), editor of the third edition of Sir Isaac Newton's *Principia*.

<sup>17</sup> Sir Hans Sloane (1660–1753), famous botanist and physician, and president of the Royal Society, 1727–1741.



between Breakfast and Dinner; a Pint at Dinner; a Pint in the Afternoon about Six o'Clock, and another when he had done his Day's-Work. I thought it a detestable Custom.—But it was necessary, he suppos'd to drink *strong* Beer that he might be *strong* to labour. I endeavour'd to convince him that the Bodily Strength afforded by Beer could only be in proportion to the Grain or Flour of the Barley dissolved in the Water of which it was made; that there was more Flour in a Penny-worth of Bread, and therefore if he would eat that with a Pint of Water, it would give him more Strength than a Quart of Beer.—He drank on however, and had 4 or 5 Shillings to pay out of his Wages every Saturday Night for that muddling Liquor; an Expence I was free from.—And thus these poor Devils keep themselves always under. . . .

¶[Further accounts of his work and of acquaintances in London.]

Thus I spent about 18 Months in London. Most Part of the Time, I work'd hard at my Business, and spent but little upon myself except in seeing Plays, and in Books.—My Friend Ralph had kept me poor. He owed me about 27 Pounds; which I was now never likely to receive; a great Sum out of my small Earnings. I lov'd him notwithstanding, for he had many amiable Qualities.—Tho' I had by no means improv'd my Fortune. But I had pick'd up some very ingenious Acquaintance whose Conversation was of great Advantage to me, and I had read considerably.

We sail'd from Gravesend on the 23<sup>d</sup> of July 1726. For the Incidents of the Voyage, I refer you to my Journal, where you will find them all minutely related. Perhaps the most important Part of that Journal is the *Plan*<sup>18</sup> to be found in it which I formed at Sea, for regulating my future Conduct in Life. It is the more remarkable, as being formed when I was so young, and yet being pretty faithfully adhered to quite thro' to old Age.—We landed in Philadelphia on the 11th of October, where I found sundry Alterations. Keith was no longer Governor, being succeeded by Major Gordon: I met him walking the Streets as a common Citizen. He seem'd a little asham'd at seeing me, but pass'd without saying any

thing. I should have been as much asham'd at seeing Miss Read, had not her Fr<sup>ds</sup>, despairing with Reason of my Return, after the Receipt of my Letter, persuaded her to marry another, one Rogers, a Potter, which was done in my Absence. With him however she was never happy, and soon parted from him, refusing to cohabit with him, or bear his Name[,] it being now said that he had another Wife. He was a worthless Fellow tho' an excellent Workman[,] which was the Temptation to her Friends. He got into Debt, ran away in 1727 or 28, and went to the West Indies, and died there. Keimer had got a better House, a Shop well supply'd with Stationary[,] plenty of new Types, a number of Hands tho' none good, and seem'd to have a great deal of Business. . . .

¶[Various employments in Philadelphia; return to Keimer's shop, where the improvements Franklin instituted soon made him "quite a Factotum," at the same time that he put Keimer's printing establishment in good order.]

But however serviceable I might be, I found that my Services became every Day of less Importance, as the other Hands improv'd in the Business. And when Keimer paid my second Quarter's Wages, he let me know that he felt them too heavy, and thought I should make an Abatement. He grew by degrees less civil, put on more of the Master, frequently found Fault, was captious and seem'd ready for an Out-breaking. I went on nevertheless with a good deal of Patience, thinking that his incumber'd Circumstances were partly the Cause. At length a Trifle snapt our Connexion. For a great Noise happening near the Courthouse, I put my Head out of the Window to see what was the Matter. Keimer being in the Street look'd up and saw me, call'd out to me in a loud voice and angry Tone to mind my Business, adding some reproachful Words, that nettled me the more for their Publicity, all the Neighbours who were looking out on the same Occasion being Witnesses how I was treated. He came up immediately into the Printing-House, continu'd the Quarrel, high Words pass'd on both Sides, he gave me the Quarter's Warning we had stipulated, expressing a Wish that he had not been oblig'd to do so long a Warning. I told him his Wish was unnecessary for I would leave him that Instant; and so taking my Hat walk'd out of Doors; desiring Meredith whom I saw below to take care of some Things I left, and bring them to my Lodging. . . .

<sup>18</sup> This Plan is not found in the *Journal* as printed in Franklin's *Writings*, II, 53–86.



[(Preliminary plans for setting up an independent printing establishment with Hugh Meredith for a partner; employment as a printer in Burlington, N. J.; formation of valuable friendships there.]

Before I enter upon my public Appearance in Business it may be well to let you know the then State of my Mind, with regard to my Principles and Morals, that you may see how far those influenc'd the future Events of my Life. My Parent's [sic] had early given me religious Impressions, and brought me through my Childhood piously in the Dissenting Way. But I was scarce 15 when, after doubting by turns of several Points as I found them disputed in the different Books I read, I began to doubt of Revelation it self. Some Books against Deism fell into my Hands; they were said to be the Substance of Sermons preached at Boyle's Lectures.<sup>19</sup> It happened that they wrought an Effect on me quite contrary to what was intended by them: For the Arguments of the Deists which were quoted to be refuted, appeared to me much Stronger than the Refutations.<sup>20</sup> In short I soon became a thorough Deist. My Arguments perverted some others, particularly Collins and Ralph: but each of them having afterwards wrong'd me greatly without the least Compunction and recollecting Keith's Conduct towards me, (who was another Freethinker) and my own towards Vernon and Miss Read, which at Times gave me great Trouble, I began to suspect that this Doctrine tho' it might be true, was not very useful.—My London Pamphlet, which had for its Motto these Lines of Dryden

*Whatever is, is right. Tho' purblind Man  
Sees but a Part of the Chain, the nearest Link,  
His Eyes not carrying to the equal Beam,  
That poises all, above.*

And from the Attributes of God, his infinite Wisdom, Goodness and Power concluded that nothing could possibly be wrong in the World, and that Vice and Virtue were empty Distinctions, no such Things existing; appear'd now not so clever a Performance as I once thought it; and I doubted whether some Error had not insinuated itself unperceiv'd, into my Argument, so as to infect all that follow'd, as is common in metaphysical Reasonings.—I grew convinc'd that Truth, Sincerity and Integrity in Dealings between Man and Man, were of the utmost Importance to the Felicity of Life, and I form'd written Resolutions,

<sup>19</sup> A course of lectures instituted in 1692 by the gift of money made by Robert Boyle (1627–1691), the design being to defend Christianity against skepticism and infidelity.

(w<sup>ch</sup> still remain in my Journal Book) to practice them everwhile I lived. Revelation had indeed no weight with me as such; but I entertain'd an Opinion, that tho' certain Actions might not be bad *because* they were forbidden by it, or good *because* it commanded them; yet probably those Actions might be forbidden *because* they were bad for us, or commanded *because* they were beneficial to us, in their own Natures, all the Circumstances of things considered. And this Persuasion, with the kind hand of Providence, or some guardian Angel, or accidental favourable Circumstances and Situations, or all together, preserved me (thro' this dangerous Time of Youth and the hazardous Situations I was sometimes in among Strangers, remote from the Eye and Advice of my Father) without any wilful gross Immorality or Injustice that might have been expected from my Want of Religion. I say *wilful*, because the Instances I have mention'd, had something of *Necessity* in them, from my Youth, Inexperience, and the Knavery of others. I had therefore a tolerable Character to begin the World with, I valued it properly, and determin'd to preserve it. . . .

[(Establishment of printing business by Franklin and Meredith in 1728.)]

I should have mention'd before, that in the Autumn of the preceeding Year I had formed most of my ingenious Acquaintance into a Club of mutual Improvement, which we called the Junto. We met on Friday Evenings. The Rules I drew up required that every Member in his Turn should produce one or more Queries on any Point of Morals, Politics or Natural Philosophy, to be discussed by the Company, and once in three Months produce and read an Essay of his own Writing on any Subject he pleased. Our Debates were to be under the Direction of a President and to be conducted in the sincere Spirit of Enquiry after Truth, without Fondness for Dispute, or Desire of Victory; and to prevent Warmth all Expressions of Positiveness in Opinions or direct Contradiction, were after some time made contraband and prohibited under small pecuniary Penalties.—The first Members were Joseph Breintnal,<sup>20</sup> a Copyer of Deeds for the Scriveners; a good-natur'd friendly middle-ag'd Man, a great Lover of Poetry, reading all he could meet with, and writing some that was tolerable; very ingenious in many little Nicknackeries, and of

<sup>20</sup> Collaborator with Franklin in the *Busy-Body* essays published in Bradford's *American Weekly Mercury* in 1729.

sensible Conversation. Thomas Godfrey,<sup>21</sup> a self-taught Mathematician, great in his Way, and afterwards Inventor of what is now call'd Hadley's Quadrant. But he knew little out of his way, and was not a pleasing Companion, as like most Great Mathematicians I have met with, he expected universal Precision in every thing said, or was forever denying or distinguishing upon Trifles, to the Disturbance of all Conversation. He soon left us. Nicholas Scull, a Surveyor, afterwards Surveyor-General, who lov'd Books, 10 and sometimes made a few Verses. William Parsons,<sup>22</sup> bred a Shoemaker, but loving Reading, had acquir'd a considerable Share of Mathematics, which he first studied with a View to Astrology that he afterwards laugh'd at. He also became Surveyor General. William Maugridge, a Joiner, a most exquisite Mechanic and a solid sensible Man. Hugh Meredith, Stephen Potts, and George Webb, I have Characteris'd before. Robert Grace, a young Gentleman of some Fortune, generous, lively and witty, a Lover of 20 Punning and of his Friends. And William Coleman, then a Merchant's Clerk, about my Age, who had the coolest clearest Head, the best Heart, and the exactest Morals, of almost any Man I ever met with. He became afterwards a Merchant of great Note, and one of our Provincial Judges. Our Friendship continued without Interruption to his death upwards of 40 Years. And the club continu'd almost as long[,] and was the best School of Philosophy, and Politics that then existed in the Province; for our Queries 30 which were read the Week preceding their Discussion, put us on reading with Attention upon the several Subjects, that we might speak more to the purpose: and here too we acquired better Habits of Conversation, every thing being studied in our Rules which might prevent our disgusting each other. From hence the long Continuance of the Club, which I shall have frequent Occasion to speak farther of hereafter; But my giving this Account of it here, is to show something of the Interest I had, every one 40 of these exerting themselves in recommending Business to us. . . .

[[Details of Franklin's industrious and prudential manner of conducting his thriving business.]]

<sup>21</sup> Author of *The Prince of Parthia*, the first regular American tragedy. Godfrey learned Latin in order to read Newton's *Principia*.

<sup>22</sup> For a more detailed account of this junto of friends, see James Parton's *Life and Times of Benjamin Franklin*, I, 154-167.

George Webb, who had found a Friend that lent him wherewith to purchase his Time of Keimer, now came to offer himself as a Journeyman to us. We could not then employ him, but I foolishly let him know, as a Secret, that I soon intended to begin a Newspaper, and might then have Work for him. My Hopes of Success as I told him were founded on this, that the then only Newspaper [the *American Weekly Mercury*], printed by Bradford was a paltry thing, 10 wretchedly manag'd, no way entertaining; and yet was profitable to him.—I therefore thought a good Paper could scarcely fail of good Encouragement. I requested Webb not to mention it, but he told it to Keimer, who immediately, to be beforehand with me, published Proposals for Printing one himself, on which Webb was to be employ'd.—I resented this, and to counteract them, as I could not yet begin our Paper, I wrote several Pieces of Entertainment for Bradford's Paper, under the Title of the Busy Body 20 which Brientnal continu'd some Months. By this means the Attention of the Publick was fix'd on that Paper, and Keimer's Proposals which we burlesqu'd and ridicul'd, were disregarded. He began his Paper however, and after carrying it on three Quarters of a Year with at most only 90 Subscribers, he offer'd it to me for a Trifle, and I having been ready some time to go on with it, took it in hand directly, and it prov'd in a few years extremely profitable to me.

I perceive that I am apt to speak in the singular Number, though our Partnership still continu'd. The Reason may be, that in fact the whole Management of the Business lay upon me. Meredith was no Compositor, a poor Pressman, and seldom sober. My Friends lamented my Connection with him, but I was to make the best of it. . . .

[[Further details of business; purchase of Meredith's share, July 14, 1730.]]

About this Time there was a Cry among the People for more Paper-Money, only 15,000£ being extant in the Province and that soon to be sunk. The wealthy Inhabitants oppos'd any Addition, being against all Paper Currency, from an Apprehension that it would depreciate as it had done in New England to the Prejudice of all Creditors.—We had discuss'd this Point in our Junto, where I was on the Side of an Addition, being persuaded that the first small Sum struck in 1723 had done much good, by increasing the Trade[,] Employment, and Number of

Inhabitants in the Province, since I now saw all the old Houses inhabited, and many new ones building, where as I remember'd well, that when I first walk'd about the Streets of Philadelphia, eating my Roll, I saw most of the Houses in Walnut Street between Second and Front Streets with Bills on their Doors, to be let; and many likewise in Chestnut Street, and other Streets; which made me then think the Inhabitants of the City were deserting it, one after another.—Our Debates possess'd me so fully of the Subject, that I wrote and printed an anonymous Pamphlet on it, entituled, *The Nature and Necessity of a Paper Currency*. It was well receiv'd by the common People in general; but the Rich Men dislik'd it; for it increas'd and strengthen'd the Clamour for more Money; and they happening to have no Writers among them that were able to answer it, their Opposition slacken'd, and the Point was carried by a Majority in the House. My Friends there, who conceiv'd I had been of some Service, thought fit to reward me, by employing me in printing the Money, a very profitable Jobb, and a great Help to me.—This was another Advantage gain'd by my being able to write[.] The Utility of this Currency became by Time and Experience so evident, as never afterwards to be much disputed, so that it grew soon to 55000,£ and in 1739 to 80,000£ since which it arose during War to upwards of 350,000£. Trade, Building and Inhabitants all the while increasing. Tho' I now think there are Limits beyond which the Quantity may be hurtful.—

I soon after obtain'd, thro' my Friend Hamilton, the Printing of the New Castle Paper Money, another profitable Jobb, as I then thought it; small Things appearing great to those in small Circumstances. And these to me were really great Advantages, as they were great Encouragements. He procur'd me also the Printing of the Laws and Votes of that Government which continu'd in my Hands as long as I follow'd the Business.—

I now open'd a little Stationer's Shop. I had in it Blanks of all Sorts[,] the correctest that ever appear'd among us, being assisted in that by my Friend Brientnal; I had also Paper, Parchment, Chapmen's Books, etc. One Whitena[r]sh[,] a Compositor I had known in London, an excellent Workman[,] now came to me and work'd with me constantly and diligently, and I took an Apprentice[,] the Son of Aquila Rose. I began now gradually to pay off the Debt I

was under for the Printing-House. In order to secure my Credit and Character as a Tradesman, I took care not only to be in *Reality* Industrious and frugal, but to avoid all *Appearances* of the Contrary. I drest plainly; I was seen at no Places of idle Diversion; I never went out a fishing or Shooting; a Book, indeed, sometimes debauch'd me from my Work; but that was seldom, snug, and gave no Scandal: and to show that I was not above my Business, I sometimes brought home the Paper I purchas'd at the Stores, thro' the Streets on a Wheelbarrow. Thus being esteem'd an industrious thriving young Man, and paying duly for what I bought, the Merchants who imported Stationary solicited my Custom, others propos'd supplying me with Books, I went on swimmingly.—In the mean time Keimer's Credit and Business declining daily, he was at last forc'd to sell his Printing-house to satisfy his Creditors. He went to Barbadoes, there lived some Years, in very poor Circumstances. . . .

([Further details of business; also brief accounts of emotional entanglements, courtship, and marriage on September 1, 1730.]

About [th]is Time our Club meeting, not at a Tavern, but in a little Room of Mr. Grace's set apart for that Purpose; a Proposition was made by me that since our Books were often referr'd to in our Disquisitions upon the Queries, it might be convenient to us to have them all together where we met, that upon Occasion they might be consulted; and by thus clubbing our Books to a common Library, we should, while we lik'd to keep them together, have each of us the Advantage of using the Books of all the other Members, which would be nearly as beneficial as if each owned the whole. It was lik'd and agreed to, and we fill'd one End of the Room with such Books as we could best spare. The Number was not so great as we expected; and tho' they had been of great Use, yet some Inconveniencies occurring for want of due Care of them, the Collection after about a Year was separated, and each took his Books home again.

And now I set on foot my first Project of a public Nature, [th]at for a Subscription Library. [I] drew up the Proposals, got them put into Form by our great Scrivener Brockden, and by the help of my Friends in the Junto, procur'd Fifty Subscribers of 40/ each to begin with and 10/ a Year for 50 Years, the Term our Company was to continue. We after-

wards obtain'd a Charter, the Company being increas'd to 100. This was the Mother of all the N American Subscription Libraries now so numerous, is become a great thing itself, and continually increasing.—These Libraries have improv'd the general Conversation of the Americans, made the common Tradesmen and Farmers as intelligent as most Gentlemen from other Countries, and perhaps have contributed in some degree to the Stand so generally made throughout the Colonies in Defence of their Privileges.<sup>23</sup>

[(Lack of good book shops and libraries in the colonies; further account of the organization of subscription libraries.]

This library afforded me the means of improvement by constant study, for which I set apart an hour or two each day, and thus repair'd in some degree the loss of the learned education my father once intended for me. Reading was the only amusement I allow'd myself. I spent no time in taverns, games, or frolicks of any kind; and my industry in my business continu'd as indefatigable as it was necessary. I was indebted for my printing-house; I had a young family coming on to be educated, and I had to contend with for business two printers, who were established in the place before me. My circumstances, however, grew daily easier. My original habits of frugality continuing, and my father having, among his instructions to me when a boy, frequently repeated a proverb of Solomon, "Seest thou a man diligent in his calling, he shall stand before kings, he shall not stand before mean men," I from thence considered industry as a means of obtaining wealth and distinction, which encourag'd me, tho' I did not think that I should ever literally *stand before kings*, which, however, has since happened; for I have stood before *five*, and even had the honour of sitting down with one, the King of Denmark, to dinner.

We have an English proverb that says, "*He that would thrive, must ask his wife.*" It was lucky for me that I had one as much dispos'd to industry and frugality as myself. She assisted me chearfully in my

business, folding and stitching pamphlets, tending shop, purchasing old linen rags for the paper-makers, etc., etc. We kept no idle servants, our table was plain and simple, our furniture of the cheapest. For instance, my breakfast was a long time bread and milk (no tea), and I ate it out of a twopenny earthen porringer, with a pewter spoon. But mark how luxury will enter families, and make a progress, in spite of principle: being call'd one morning to breakfast, I found it in a China bowl, with a spoon of silver! They had been bought for me without my knowledge by my wife, and had cost her the enormous sum of three-and-twenty shillings, for which she had no other excuse or apology to make, but that she thought *her* husband deserv'd a silver spoon and China bowl as well as any of his neighbors. This was the first appearance of plate and China in our house, which afterward, in a course of years, as our wealth increas'd, augmented gradually to several hundred pounds in value.

I had been religiously educated as a Presbyterian; and tho' some of the dogmas of that persuasion, such as *the eternal decrees of God, election, reprobation, etc.*, appeared to me unintelligible, others doubtful, and I early absented myself from the public assemblies of the sect, Sunday being my studying day, I never was without some religious principles. I never doubted, for instance, the existence of the Deity; that he made the world, and govern'd it by his Providence; that the most acceptable service of God was the doing good to man; that our souls are immortal; and that all crime will be punished, and virtue rewarded, either here or hereafter. These I esteem'd the essentials of every religion; and, being to be found in all the religions we had in our country, I respected them all, tho' with different degrees of respect, as I found them more or less mix'd with other articles, which, without any tendency to inspire, promote, or confirm morality, serv'd principally to divide us, and make us unfriendly to one another. This respect to all, with an opinion that the worst had some good effects, induc'd me to avoid all discourse that might tend to lessen the good opinion another might have of his own religion; and as our province increas'd in people, and new places of worship were continually wanted, and generally erected by voluntary contribution, my mite for such purpose, whatever might be the sect, was never refused.

Tho' I seldom attended any public worship, I had

<sup>23</sup> Here ends the first portion of the *Autobiography*, dated Twyford, 1771, when the "affairs of the Revolution occasioned the interruption." The text up to this point follows the manuscript deposited in the Henry E. Huntington Library. What follows is taken from Franklin's *Writings*, as edited by A. H. Smyth, following the transcription from the manuscripts as made by John Bigelow. The next section of the *Autobiography*, carrying the account beyond 1730, was written at Passy, near Paris, in 1784.

still an opinion of its propriety, and of its utility when rightly conducted, and I regularly paid my annual subscription for the support of the only Presbyterian minister or meeting we had in Philadelphia. He us'd to visit me sometimes as a friend, and admonish me to attend his administrations, and I was now and then prevail'd on to do so, once for five Sundays successively. Had he been in my opinion a good preacher, perhaps I might have continued, notwithstanding the occasion I had for the Sunday's 10 leisure in my course of study; but his discourses were chiefly either polemic arguments, or explications of the peculiar doctrines of our sect, and were all to me very dry, uninteresting, and unedifying, since not a single moral principle was inculcated or enforc'd, their aim seeming to be rather to make us Presbyterians than good citizens.

At length he took for his text that verse of the fourth chapter of Philippians, "*Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, 20 or of good report, if there be any virtue, or any praise, think on these things.*" And I imagin'd, in a sermon on such a text, we could not miss of having some morality. But he confin'd himself to five points only, as meant by the apostle, viz: 1. Keeping holy the Sabbath day. 2. Being diligent in reading the holy Scriptures. 3. Attending duly the publick worship. 4. Partaking of the Sacrament. 5. Paying a due respect to God's ministers. These might be all good things; but, as they were not the kind of good things 30 that I expected from that text, I despaired of ever meeting with them from any other, was disgusted, and attended his preaching no more. I had some years before compos'd a little Liturgy, or form of prayer, for my own private use (viz., in 1728), entitled *Articles of Belief and Acts of Religion*. I return'd to the use of this, and went no more to the public assemblies. My conduct might be blameable, but I leave it, without attempting further to excuse it; my present purpose being to relate facts, and not 40 to make apologies for them.

It was about this time I conceiv'd the bold and arduous project of arriving at moral perfection. I wish'd to live without committing any fault at any time; I would conquer all that either natural inclination, custom, or company might lead me into. As I knew, or thought I knew, what was right and wrong, I did not see why I might not always do the one and avoid the other. But I soon found I had undertaken

a task of more difficulty than I had imagined. While my care was employ'd in guarding against one fault, I was often surprised by another; habit took the advantage of inattention; inclination was sometimes too strong for reason. I concluded, at length, that the mere speculative conviction that it was our interest to be completely virtuous, was not sufficient to prevent our slipping; and that the contrary habits must be broken, and good ones acquired and established, before we can have any dependence on a steady, uniform rectitude of conduct. For this purpose I therefore contrived the following method.

In the various enumerations of the moral virtues I had met with in my reading, I found the catalogue more or less numerous, as different writers included more or fewer ideas under the same name. Temperance, for example, was by some confined to eating and drinking, while by others it was extended to mean the moderating every other pleasure, appetite, inclination, or passion, bodily or mental, even to our avarice and ambition. I propos'd to myself, for the sake of clearness, to use rather more names, with fewer ideas annex'd to each, than a few names with more ideas; and I included under thirteen names of virtues all that at that time occur'd to me as necessary or desirable, and annexed to each a short precept, which fully express'd the extent I gave to its meaning.

These names of virtues, with their precepts, were:

#### 1. TEMPERANCE

Eat not to dullness; drink not to elevation.

#### 2. SILENCE

Speak not but what may benefit others or yourself; avoid trifling conversation.

#### 3. ORDER

Let all your things have their places; let each part of your business have its time.

#### 4. RESOLUTION

Resolve to perform what you ought; perform without fail what you resolve.

#### 5. FRUGALITY

Make no expense but to do good to others or yourself; *i. e.*, waste nothing.

#### 6. INDUSTRY

Lose no time; be always employ'd in something useful; cut off all unnecessary actions.

7. SINCERITY

Use no hurtful deceit; think innocently and justly, and, if you speak, speak accordingly.

8. JUSTICE

Wrong none by doing injuries, or omitting the benefits that are your duty.

9. MODERATION

Avoid extremes; forbear resenting injuries so much as you think they deserve.

10. CLEANLINESS

Tolerate no uncleanness in body, cloaths, or habitation.

11. TRANQUILLITY

Be not disturbed at trifles, or at accidents common or unavoidable.

12. CHASTITY

Rarely use venery but for health or offspring, never to dulness, weakness, or the injury of your own or another's peace or reputation.

13. HUMILITY

Imitate Jesus and Socrates.

My intention being to acquire the *habitude* of all these virtues, I judg'd it would be well not to distract my attention by attempting the whole at once, but to fix it on one of them at a time; and, when I should be master of that, then to proceed to another, and so on, till I should have gone thro' the thirteen; and, as the previous acquisition of some might facilitate the acquisition of certain others, I arrang'd them with that view, as they stand above. Temperance first, as it tends to procure that coolness and clearness of head, which is so necessary where constant vigilance was to be kept up, and guard maintained against the unremitting attraction of ancient habits, and the force of perpetual temptations. This being acquir'd and establish'd, Silence would be more easy; and my desire being to gain knowledge at the same time that I improv'd in virtue, and considering that in conversation it was obtain'd rather by the use of the ears than of the tongue, and therefore wishing to break a habit I was getting into of prattling, punning, and joking, which only made me acceptable to

trifling company, I gave *Silence* the second place. This and the next, *Order*, I expected would allow me more time for attending to my project and my studies. *Resolution*, once become habitual, would keep me firm in my endcavours to obtain all the subsequent virtues; *Frugality* and Industry freeing me from my remaining debt, and producing affluence and independence, would make more easy the practice of Sincerity and Justice, etc., etc. Conceiving then, that, agreeably to the advice of Pythagoras in his *Golden Verses*, daily examination would be necessary, I contrived the following method for conducting that examination.

I made a little book,<sup>24</sup> in which I allotted a page for each of the virtues. I rul'd each page with red ink, so as to have seven columns, one for each day of the week, marking each column with a letter for the day. I cross'd these columns with thirteen red lines, marking the beginning of each line with the first letter of one of the virtues, on which line, and in its proper column, I might mark, by a little black spot, every fault I found upon examination to have been committed respecting that virtue upon that day.

Form of the Pages

TEMPERANCE.							
EAT NOT TO DULNESS. DRINK NOT TO ELEVATION.							
	S.	M.	T.	W.	T.	F.	S.
T.							
S.	*	*		*		*	
O.	* *	*	*		*	*	*
R.			*			*	
F.		*			*		
I.			*				
S.							
J.							
M.							
C.							
T.							
C.							
H.							

<sup>24</sup> Dated July 1, 1733.

I determined to give a week's strict attention to each of the virtues successively. Thus, in the first week, my great guard was to avoid every the least offence against *Temperance*, leaving the other virtues to their ordinary chance, only marking every evening the faults of the day. Thus, if in the first week I could keep my first line, marked T, clear of spots, I suppos'd the habit of that virtue so much strengthen'd, and its opposite weaken'd, that I might venture extending my attention to include the next, and for the following week keep both lines clear of spots. Proceeding thus to the last, I could go thro' a course compleat in thirteen weeks, and four courses in a year. And like him who, having a garden to weed, does not attempt to eradicate all the bad herbs at once, which would exceed his reach and his strength, but works on one of the beds at a time, and, having accomplish'd the first, proceeds to a second, so I should have, I hoped, the encouraging pleasure of seeing on my pages the progress I made in virtue, by clearing successively my lines of their spots, till in the end, by a number of courses, I should be happy in viewing a clean book, after a thirteen weeks' daily examination.

This my little book had for its motto these lines from Addison's *Cato*:

Here will I hold. If there's a power above us  
(And that there is, all nature cries aloud  
Thro' all her works), He must delight in virtue;  
And that which he delights in must be happy.

30

Another from Cicero,

O vitæ Philosophia dux! O virtutum indagatrix expul-  
trixque vitiorum! Unus dies, bene et ex præceptis tuis actus,  
peccanti immortalitati est anteponeendus.<sup>25</sup>

Another from the Proverbs of Solomon, speaking of wisdom or virtue:

Length of days is in her right hand, and in her left hand riches and honour. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.—iii. 16, 17.

And conceiving God to be the fountain of wisdom, I thought it right and necessary to solicit his assistance for obtaining it; to this end I formed the following little prayer, which was prefix'd to my tables of examination, for daily use.

<sup>25</sup> "O, Philosophy, guide of life! O, investigator and expeller of crimes! A single day, lived well and in accordance with your precepts, is to be preferred to sinful immortality."

*O powerful Goodness! bountiful Father! merciful Guide! Increase in me that wisdom which discovers my truest interest. Strengthen my resolutions to perform what that wisdom dictates. Accept my kind offices to thy other children as the only return in my power for thy continual favours to me.*

I used also sometimes a little prayer which I took from Thomson's *Poems*, viz.:

Father of light and life, thou Good Supreme!  
O teach me what is good; teach me Thyself!  
Save me from folly, vanity, and vice,  
From every low pursuit; and fill my soul  
With knowledge, conscious peace, and virtue pure;  
Sacred, substantial, never-fading bliss!

The precept of *Order* requiring that *every part of my business should have its allotted time*, one page in my little book contain'd the following scheme of employment for the twenty-four hours of a natural day.

THE MORNING Question. What good shall I do this day?	{	5	Rise, wash, and address
		6	Powerful Goodness! Contrive day's business, and take the resolution of the day; prosecute the present study, and breakfast.
		7	
		8	
		9	Work.
NOON.	{	10	
		11	
		12	Read, or overlook my ac-
		1	counts, and dine.
		2	
EVENING. Question. What good have I done to-day?	{	3	Work.
		4	
		5	
		6	Put things in their places.
		7	Supper. Music or diversion,
NIGHT.	{	8	or conversation. Examination of the day.
		9	
		10	
		11	
		12	
	{	1	Sleep.
		2	
		3	
		4	

I enter'd upon the execution of this plan for self-examination, and continu'd it with occasional intermissions for some time. I was surpris'd to find myself so much fuller of faults than I had imagined; but I had the satisfaction of seeing them diminish. To avoid

the trouble of renewing now and then my little book, which, by scraping out the marks on the paper of old faults to make room for new ones in a new course, became full of holes, I transferr'd my tables and precepts to the ivory leaves of a memorandum book, on which the lines were drawn with red ink, that made a durable stain, and on those lines I mark'd my faults with a black-lead pencil, which marks I could easily wipe out with a wet sponge. After a while I went thro' one course only in a year, and afterward only one in several years, till at length I omitted them entirely, being employ'd in voyages and business abroad, with a multiplicity of affairs that interfered; but I always carried my little book with me.

My scheme of ORDER gave me the most trouble; and I found that, tho' it might be practicable where a man's business was such as to leave him the disposition of his time, that of a journeyman printer, for instance, it was not possible to be exactly observed by a master, who must mix with the world, and often receive people of business at their own hours. *Order*, too, with regard to places for things, papers, etc., I found extremely difficult to acquire. I had not been early accustomed to it, and, having an exceeding good memory, I was not so sensible of the inconvenience attending want of method. This article, therefore, cost me so much painful attention, and my faults in it vexed me so much, and I made so little progress in amendment, and had such frequent relapses, that I was almost ready to give up the attempt, and content myself with a faulty character in that respect, like the man who, in buying an ax of a smith, my neighbour, desired to have the whole of its surface as bright as the edge. The smith consented to grind it bright for him if he would turn the wheel; he turn'd, while the smith press'd the broad face of the ax hard and heavily on the stone, which made the turning of it very fatiguing. The man came every now and then from the wheel to see how the work went on, and at length would take his ax as it was, without farther grinding. "No," said the smith, "turn on, turn on; we shall have it bright by-and-by; as yet, it is only speckled." "Yes," says the man, "*but I think I like a speckled ax best.*" And I believe this may have been the case with many, who, having, for want of some such means as I employ'd, found the difficulty of obtaining good and breaking bad habits in other points of vice and virtue,

have given up the struggle, and concluded that "*a speckled ax was best*"; for something, that pretended to be reason, was every now and then suggesting to me that such extream nicety as I exacted of myself might be a kind of foppery in morals, which, if it were known, would make me ridiculous; that a perfect character might be attended with the inconvenience of being envied and hated; and that a benevolent man should allow a few faults in himself, to keep his friends in countenance.

In truth, I found myself incorrigible with respect to Order; and now I am grown old, and my memory bad, I feel very sensibly the want of it. But, on the whole, tho' I never arrived at the perfection I had been so ambitious of obtaining, but fell far short of it, yet I was, by the endeavour, a better and a happier man than I otherwise should have been if I had not attempted it; as those who aim at perfect writing by imitating the engraved copies, tho' they never reach the wish'd-for excellence of those copies, their hand is mended by the endeavour, and is tolerable while it continues fair and legible.

It may be well my posterity should be informed that to this little artifice, with the blessing of God, their ancestor ow'd the constant felicity of his life, down to his 79th year in which this is written. What reverses may attend the remainder is in the hand of Providence; but, if they arrive, the reflection on past happiness enjoy'd ought to help his bearing them with more resignation. To Temperance he ascribes his long-continued health, and what is still left to him of a good constitution; to Industry and Frugality, the early casiness of his circumstances and acquisition of his fortune, with all that knowledge that enabled him to be a useful citizen, and obtained for him some degree of reputation among the learned; to Sincerity and Justice, the confidence of his country, and the honorable employs it conferred upon him; and to the joint influence of the whole mass of the virtues, even in the imperfect state he was able to acquire them, all that evenness of temper, and that cheerfulness in conversation, which makes his company still sought for, and agreeable even to his younger acquaintance. I hope, therefore, that some of my descendants may follow the example and reap the benefit.

It will be remark'd that, tho' my scheme was not wholly without religion, there was in it no mark of any of the distinguishing tenets of any particular



sect. I had purposely avoided them; for, being fully persuaded of the utility and excellency of my method, and that it might be servicable to people in all religions, and intending some time or other to publish it, I would not have any thing in it that should prejudice any one, of any sect, against it. I purposed writing a little comment on each virtue, in which I would have shown the advantages of possessing it, and the mischiefs attending its opposite vice; and I should have called my book *THE ART OF VIRTUE*,\* 10 because it would have shown the means and manner of obtaining virtue, which would have distinguished it from the mere exhortation to be good, that does not instruct and indicate the means, but is like the apostle's man of verbal charity, who only, without showing to the naked and hungry how or where they might get clothes or victuals, exhorted them to be fed and clothed.—James ii. 15, 16.

But it so happened that my intention of writing and publishing this comment was never fulfilled. I 20 did, indeed, from time to time, put down short hints of the sentiments, reasonings, etc., to be made use of in it, some of which I have still by me; but the necessary close attention to private business in the earlier part of my life, and public business since, have occasioned my postponing it; for, it being connected in my mind with a *great and extensive project*, that required the whole man to execute, and which an unforeseen succession of employs prevented my attending to, it has hitherto remain'd unfinish'd. 30

In this piece it was my design to explain and enforce this doctrine, that vicious actions are not hurtful because they are forbidden, but forbidden because they are hurtful, the nature of man alone considered; that it was, therefore, every one's interest to be virtuous who wish'd to be happy even in this world; and I should, from this circumstance (there being always in the world a number of rich merchants, nobility, states, and princes, who have need of honest instruments for the management of their affairs, and 40 such being so rare), have endeavoured to convince young persons that no qualities were so likely to make a poor man's fortune as those of probity and integrity.

My list of virtues contain'd at first but twelve; but a Quaker friend having kindly informed me that I was generally thought proud; that my pride show'd itself frequently in conversation; that I was not con-

tent with being in the right when discussing any point, but was overbearing, and rather insolent, of which he convinc'd me by mentioning several instances; I determin'd endeavouring to cure myself, if I could, of this vice or folly among the rest, and I added *Humility* to my list, giving an extensive meaning to the word.

I cannot boast of much success in acquiring the *reality* of this virtue, but I had a good deal with regard to the *appearance* of it. I made it a rule to forbear all direct contradiction to the sentiments of others, and all positive assertion of my own. I even forbid myself, agreeably to the old laws of our Junto, the use of every word or expression in the language that import'd a fix'd opinion, such as *certainly*, *undoubtedly*, etc. and I adopted, instead of them, *I conceive*, *I apprehend*, or *I imagine* a thing to be so or so; or it *so appears to me at present*. When another asserted something that I thought an error, I deny'd myself the pleasure of contradicting him abruptly, and of showing immediately some absurdity in his proposition; and in answering I began by observing that in certain cases or circumstances his opinion would be right, but in the present case there *appear'd* or *seem'd* to me some difference, etc. I soon found the advantage of this change in my manner; the conversations I engag'd in went on more pleasantly. The modest way in which I propos'd my opinions procur'd them a readier reception and less contradiction; I had less mortification when I was found to be in the wrong, and I more easily prevail'd with others to give up their mistakes and join with me when I happen'd to be in the right.

And this mode, which I at first put on with some violence to natural inclination, became at length so easy, and so habitual to me, that perhaps for these fifty years past no one has ever heard a dogmatical expression escape me. And to this habit (after my character of integrity) I think it principally owing that I had early so much weight with my fellow-citizens when I proposed new institutions, or alterations in the old, and so much influence in public councils when I became a member; for I was but a bad speaker, never eloquent, subject to much hesitation in my choice of words, hardly correct in language, and yet I generally carried my points.

In reality, there is, perhaps, no one of our natural passions so hard to subdue as *pride*. Disguise it, struggle with it, beat it down, stifle it, mortify it

\* Nothing so likely to make a man's fortune as virtue.

as much as one pleases, it is still alive, and will every now and then peep out and show itself; you will see it, perhaps, often in this history; for, even if I could conceive that I had compleatly overcome it, I should probably be proud of my humility.<sup>26</sup>

Having mentioned *a great and extensive project* which I had conceiv'd, it seems proper that some account should be here given of that project and its object. Its first rise in my mind appears in the following little paper, accidentally preserv'd, viz.:

*Observations on my reading history, in Library,*  
May 19th, 1731.

That the great affairs of the world, the wars, revolutions, etc., are carried on and effected by parties.

That the view of these parties is their present general interest, or what they take to be such.

That the different views of these different parties occasion all confusion.

That while a party is carrying on a general design, each man has his particular private interest in view.

That as soon as a party has gain'd its general point, each member becomes intent upon his particular interest; which, thwarting others, breaks that party into divisions, and occasions more confusion.

That few in public affairs act from a meer view of the good of their country, whatever they may pretend; and, tho' their actings bring real good to their country, yet men primarily considered that their own and their country's interest was united, and did not act from a principle of benevolence.

That fewer still, in public affairs, act with a view to the good of mankind.

There seems to me at present to be great occasion for raising a United Party for Virtue, by forming the virtuous and good men of all nations into a regular body, to be govern'd by suitable good and wise rules, which good and wise men may probably be more unanimous in their obedience to, than common people are to common laws.

I at present think that whoever attempts this aright, and is well qualified, can not fail of pleasing God, and of meeting with success.

B. F.

Revolving this project in my mind, as to be undertaken hereafter, when my circumstances should afford me the necessary leisure, I put down from time to time, on pieces of paper, such thoughts as occur'd to me respecting it. Most of these are lost; but I find

one purporting to be the substance of an intended creed, containing, as I thought, the essentials of every known religion, and being free of every thing that might shock the professors of any religion. It is express'd in these words, viz.:

That there is one God, who made all things.

That he governs the world by his providence.

That he ought to be worshiped by adoration, prayer, and thanksgiving.

10 But that the most acceptable service of God is doing good to man.

That the soul is immortal.

And that God will certainly reward virtue and punish vice, either here or hereafter.

My ideas at that time were, that the sect should be begun and spread at first among young and single men only; that each person to be initiated should not only declare his assent to such creed, but should have exercised himself with the thirteen weeks' examination and practice of the virtues, as in the before-mention'd model; that the existence of such a society should be kept a secret, till it was become considerable, to prevent solicitations for the admission of improper persons, but that the members should each of them search among his acquaintance for ingenuous, well-disposed youths, to whom, with prudent caution, the scheme should be gradually communicated; that the members should engage to afford their advice, assistance, and support to each other in promoting one another's interests, business, and advancement in life; that, for distinction, we should be call'd *The Society of the Free and Easy*: free, as being, by the general practice and habit of the virtues, 20 free from the dominion of vice; and particularly by the practice of industry and frugality, free from debt, which exposes a man to confinement, and a species of slavery to his creditors.

This is as much as I can now recollect of the project, except that I communicated it in part to two young men, who adopted it with some enthusiasm; but my then narrow circumstances, and the necessity I was under of sticking close to my business, occasion'd my postponing the further prosecution of it 30 at that time; and my multifarious occupations, public and private, induc'd me to continue postponing, so that it has been omitted till I have no longer strength or activity left sufficient for such an enterprise; tho' I am still of opinion that it was a practicable scheme, and might have been very useful, by 40

<sup>26</sup> At this point Franklin wrote the following memoranda in the margin: "Thus far written at Passy, 1784." "I am now about to write at home, August, 1788, but cannot have the help expected from my papers, many of them being lost in the war. I have, however, found the following."

The final section, covering the years 1757-1759, was added in 1789.

forming a great number of good citizens; and I was not discourag'd by the seeming magnitude of the undertaking, as I have always thought that one man of tolerable abilities may work great changes, and accomplish great affairs among mankind, if he first forms a good plan, and, cutting off all amusements or other employments that would divert his attention, makes the execution of that same plan his sole study and business.

In 1732 I first publish'd my Almanack, under the 10 name of *Richard Saunders*; it was continu'd by me about twenty-five years, commonly call'd *Poor Richard's Almanack*. I endeavour'd to make it both entertaining and useful, and it accordingly came to be in such demand, that I reap'd considerable profit from it, vending annually near ten thousand. And observing that it was generally read, scarce any neighborhood in the province being without it, I consider'd it as a proper vehicle for conveying instruction among the common people, who bought scarcely any other 20 books; I therefore filled all the little spaces that occur'd between the remarkable days in the calendar with proverbial sentences, chiefly such as inculcated industry and frugality, as the means of procuring wealth, and thereby securing virtue; it being more difficult for a man in want, to act always honestly, as, to use here one of those proverbs, *it is hard for an empty sack to stand upright*.

These proverbs, which contained the wisdom of many ages and nations, I assembled and form'd into 30 a connected discourse prefix'd to the Almanack of 1757, as the harangue of a wise old man to the people attending an auction. The bringing all these scatter'd counsels thus into a focus enabled them to make greater impression. The piece, being universally approved, was copied in all the newspapers of the Continent; reprinted in Britain on a broad side, to be stuck up in houses; two translations were made of it in French, and great numbers bought by the clergy and gentry, to distribute gratis among their poor 40 parishioners and tenants. In Pennsylvania, as it discouraged useless expense in foreign superfluities, some thought it had its share of influence in producing that growing plenty of money which was observable for several years after its publication.

I considered my newspaper, also, as another means of communicating instruction, and in that view frequently reprinted in it extracts from the *Spectator*, and other moral writers; and sometimes publish'd

little pieces of my own, which had been first compos'd for reading in our Junto. Of these are a Socratic dialogue, tending to prove that, whatever might be his parts and abilities, a vicious man could not properly be called a man of sense; and a discourse on self-denial, showing that virtue was not secure till its practice became a habitude, and was free from the opposition of contrary inclinations. These may be found in the papers about the beginning of 1735.

In the conduct of my newspaper, I carefully excluded all libelling and personal abuse, which is of late years become so disgraceful to our country. Whenever I was solicited to insert any thing of that kind, and the writers pleaded, as they generally did, the liberty of the press, and that a newspaper was like a stage-coach, in which any one who would pay had a right to a place, my answer was, that I would print the piece separately if desired, and the author might have as many copies as he pleased to distribute himself, but that I would not take upon me to spread his detraction; and that, having contracted with my subscribers to furnish them with what might be either useful or entertaining, I could not fill their papers with private altercation, in which they had no concern, without doing them manifest injustice. Now, many of our printers make no scruple of gratifying the malice of individuals by false accusations of the fairest characters among ourselves, augmenting animosity even to the producing of duels; and are, moreover, so indiscreet as to print scurrilous reflections on the government of neighboring states, and even on the conduct of our best national allies, which may be attended with the most pernicious consequences. These things I mention as a caution to young printers, and that they may be encouraged not to pollute their presses and disgrace their profession by such infamous practices, but refuse steadily, as they may see by my example that such a course of conduct will not, on the whole, be injurious to their interests. . . .

¶[*Expansion of business interests.*]

I had begun in 1733 to study languages; I soon made myself so much a master of the French as to be able to read the books with ease. I then undertook the Italian. An acquaintance, who was also learning it, us'd often to tempt me to play chess with him. Finding this took up too much of the time I had to spare for study, I at length refus'd to play any more,

unless on this condition, that the victor in every game should have a right to impose a task, either in parts of the grammar to be got by heart, or in translations, etc., which tasks the vanquish'd was to perform upon honour, before our next meeting. As we play'd pretty equally, we thus beat one another into that language. I afterwards with a little painstaking, acquir'd as much of the Spanish as to read their books also.

I have already mention'd that I had only one year's instruction in a Latin school, and that when very young, after which I neglected that language entirely. But, when I had attained an acquaintance with the French, Italian, and Spanish, I was surpriz'd to find, on looking over a Latin Testament, that I understood so much more of that language than I had imagined, which encouraged me to apply myself again to the study of it, and I met with more success, as those preceding languages had greatly smooth'd my way.

From these circumstances, I have thought that there is some inconsistency in our common mode of teaching languages. We are told that it is proper to begin first with the Latin, and, having acquir'd that, it will be more easy to attain those modern languages which are deriv'd from it; and yet we do not begin with the Greek, in order more easily to acquire the Latin. It is true that, if you can clamber and get to the top of a staircase without using the steps, you will more easily gain them in descending; but certainly, if you begin with the lowest you will with more ease ascend to the top; and I would therefore offer it to the consideration of those who superintend the education of our youth, whether, since many of those who begin with the Latin quit the same after spending some years without having made any great proficiency, and what they have learnt becomes almost useless, so that their time has been lost, it would not have been better to have begun with the French, proceeding to the Italian, etc.; for, tho', after spending the same time, they should quit the study of languages and never arrive at the Latin, they would, however, have acquired another tongue or two, that, being in modern use, might be serviceable to them in common life. . . .

[*Another visit to Boston; death of a son by smallpox in 1736.*]

Our club, the Junto, was found so useful, and afforded such satisfaction to the members, that sev-

eral were desirous of introducing their friends, which could not well be done without exceeding what we had settled as a convenient number, viz., twelve. We had from the beginning made it a rule to keep our institution a secret, which was pretty well observ'd; the intention was to avoid applications of improper persons for admittance, some of whom, perhaps, we might find it difficult to refuse. I was one of those who were against any addition to our number, but, instead of it, made in writing a proposal, that every member separately should endeavour to form a subordinate club, with the same rules respecting queries, etc., and without informing them of the connection with the Junto. The advantages proposed were, the improvement of so many more young citizens by the use of our institutions; our better acquaintance with the general sentiments of the inhabitants on any occasion, as the Junto member might propose what queries we should desire, and was to report to the Junto what pass'd in his separate club; the promotion of our particular interests in business by more extensive recommendation, and the increase of our influence in public affairs, and our power of doing good by spreading thro' the several clubs the sentiments of the Junto.

The project was approv'd, and every member undertook to form his club, but they did not all succeed. Five or six only were compleated, which were called by different names, as the Vine, the Union, the Band, etc. They were useful to themselves, and afforded us a good deal of amusement, information, and instruction, besides answering, in some considerable degree, our views of influencing the public opinion on particular occasions, of which I shall give some instances in course of time as they happened. . . .

[*Chosen Clerk of the General Assembly of Pennsylvania in 1736; business further expanded; appointed postmaster in Philadelphia in 1737.*]

I began now to turn my thoughts a little to public affairs, beginning, however, with small matters. The city watch was one of the first things that I conceiv'd to want regulation. It was managed by the constables of the respective wards in turn; the constable warned a number of housekeepers to attend him for the night. Those who chose never to attend, paid him six shillings a year to be excus'd, which was suppos'd to be for hiring substitutes, but was, in reality, much

more than was necessary for that purpose, and made the constableness a place of profit; and the constable, for a little drink, often got such ragamuffins about him as a watch, that respectable housekeepers did not choose to mix with. Walking the rounds, too, was often neglected, and most of the nights spent in tippling. I thereupon wrote a paper to be read in Junto, representing these irregularities, but insisting more particularly on the inequality of this six-shilling tax of the constables, respecting the circumstances of those who paid it, since a poor widow housekeeper, all whose property to be guarded by the watch did not perhaps exceed the value of fifty pounds, paid as much as the wealthiest merchant, who had thousands of pounds' worth of goods in his stores.

On the whole, I proposed as a more effectual watch, the hiring of proper men to serve constantly in that business; and as a more equitable way of supporting the charge, the levying a tax that should be proportion'd to the property. This idea, being approv'd by the Junto, was communicated to the other clubs, but as arising in each of them; and though the plan was not immediately carried into execution, yet, by preparing the minds of people for the change, it paved the way for the law obtained a few years after, when the members of our clubs were grown into more influence.

About this time I wrote a paper (first to be read in Junto, but it was afterward publish'd) on the different accidents and carelessnesses by which houses were set on fire, with cautions against them, and means proposed of avoiding them. This was much spoken of as a useful piece, and gave rise to a project, which soon followed it, of forming a company for the more ready extinguishing of fires, and mutual assistance in removing and securing of goods when in danger. Associates in this scheme were presently found, amounting to thirty. Our articles of agreement oblig'd every member to keep always in good order, and fit for use, a certain number of leather buckets, with strong bags and baskets (for packing and transporting of goods), which were to be brought to every fire; and we agreed to meet once a month and spend a social evening together, in discoursing and communicating such ideas as occurred to us upon the subject of fires, as might be useful in our conduct on such occasions.

The utility of this institution soon appeared, and many more desiring to be admitted than we thought

convenient for one company, they were advised to form another, which was accordingly done; and this went on, one new company being formed after another, till they became so numerous as to include most of the inhabitants who were men of property; and now, at the time of my writing this, tho' upward of fifty years since its establishment, that which I first formed, called the Union Fire Company, still subsists and flourishes, tho' the first members are all deceas'd but myself and one, who is older by a year than I am. The small fines that have been paid by members for absence at the monthly meetings have been apply'd to the purchase of fire-engines, ladders, fire-hooks, and other useful implements for each company, so that I question whether there is a city in the world better provided with the means of putting a stop to beginning conflagrations; and, in fact, since these institutions, the city has never lost by fire more than one or two houses at a time, and the flames have often been extinguished before the house in which they began has been half consumed.

In 1739 arrived among us from Ireland the Reverend Mr. Whitefield, who had made himself remarkable there as an itinerant preacher. He was at first permitted to preach in some of our churches; but the clergy, taking a dislike to him, soon refus'd him their pulpits, and he was oblig'd to preach in the fields. The multitudes of all sects and denominations that attended his sermons were enormous, and it was matter of speculation to me, who was one of the number, to observe the extraordinary influence of his oratory on his hearers, and how much they admir'd and respected him, notwithstanding his common abuse of them, by assuring them they were naturally *half beasts and half devils*. It was wonderful to see the change soon made in the manners of our inhabitants. From being thoughtless or indifferent about religion, it seem'd as if all the world were growing religious, so that one could not walk thro' the town in an evening without hearing psalms sung in different families of every street. . . .

¶[Account of Whitefield's religious and charitable activities.]

I happened soon after to attend one of his sermons, in the course of which I perceived he intended to finish with a collection, and I silently resolved he should get nothing from me. I had in my pocket a handful of copper money, three or four silver dollars,

and five pistoles in gold. As he proceeded I began to soften, and concluded to give the coppers. Another stroke of his oratory made me asham'd of that, and determin'd me to give the silver; and he finish'd so admirably, that I empty'd my pocket wholly into the collector's dish, gold and all. At this sermon there was also one of our club, who, being of my sentiments respecting the building in Georgia and, suspecting a collection might be intended, had, by precaution, emptied his pockets before he came from home. Towards the conclusion of the discourse, however, he felt a strong desire to give, and apply'd to a neighbour, who stood near him, to borrow some money for the purpose. The application was unfortunately [made] to perhaps the only man in the company who had the firmness not to be affected by the preacher. His answer was, "*At any other time, Friend Hopkinson, I would lend to thee freely; but not now, for thee seems to be out of thy right senses.*" . . .

¶[Further account of Whitefield.]

He [Whitefield] us'd, indeed, sometimes to pray for my conversion, but never had the satisfaction of believing that his prayers were heard. Ours was a mere civil friendship, sincere on both sides, and lasted to his death.

The following instance will show something of the terms on which we stood. Upon one of his arrivals from England at Boston, he wrote to me that he should come soon to Philadelphia, but knew not where he could lodge when there, as he understood his old friend and host, Mr. Benezet was removed to Germantown. My answer was, "You know my house; if you can make shift with its scanty accommodations, you will be most heartily welcome." He reply'd, that if I made that kind offer for Christ's sake, I should not miss of a reward. And I returned, "*Don't let me be mistaken; it was not for Christ's sake, but for your sake.*" One of our common acquaintance jocosely remark'd, that, knowing it to be the custom of the saints, when they received any favour, to shift the burden of the obligation from off their own shoulders, and place it in heaven, I had contriv'd to fix it on earth.

The last time I saw Mr. Whitefield was in London, when he consulted me about his Orphan House concern, and his purpose of appropriating it to the establishment of a college.

He had a loud and clear voice, and articulated his

words and sentences so perfectly, that he might be heard and understood at a great distance, especially as his auditorics, however numerous, observ'd the most exact silence. He preach'd one evening from the top of the Court-house steps, which are in the middle of Market-street, and on the west side of Second-street, which crosses it at right angles. Both streets were fill'd with his hearers to a considerable distance. Being among the hindmost in Market-street, I had the curiosity to learn how far he could be heard, by retiring backwards down the street towards the river; and I found his voice distinct till I came near Front-street, when some noise in that street obscur'd it. Imagining then a semicircle, of which my distance should be the radius, and that it were fill'd with auditors, to each of whom I allow'd two square feet, I computed that he might well be heard by more than thirty thousand. This reconcil'd me to the newspaper accounts of his having preach'd to twenty-five thousand people in the fields, and to the antient histories of generals haranguing whole armies, of which I had sometimes doubted. . . .

¶[Further account of Whitefield; expansions of Franklin's business interests.]

I had, on the whole, abundant reason to be satisfied with my being established in Pennsylvania. There were, however, two things that I regretted, there being no provision for defense, nor for a complete education of youth; no militia, nor any college. I therefore, in 1743, drew up a proposal for establishing an academy; and at that time, thinking the Reverend Mr. Peters, who was out of employ, a fit person to superintend such an institution, I communicated the project to him; but he, having more profitable views in the service of the proprietaries, which succeeded, declin'd the undertaking; and, not knowing another at that time suitable for such a trust, I let the scheme lie a while dormant. I succeeded better the next year, 1744, in proposing and establishing a Philosophical Society. The paper I wrote for that purpose will be found among my writings, when collected. . . .

¶[Franklin's efforts in behalf of concerted colonial measures for military defense; his thoughts upon Quaker doctrine and practice; invention of the Franklin stove.]

Peace being concluded, and the association business therefore at an end, I turn'd my thoughts again to

the affair of establishing an academy. The first step I took was to associate in the design a number of active friends, of whom the Junto furnished a good part; the next was to write and publish a pamphlet, entitled *Proposals Relating to the Education of Youth in Pennsylvania*. This I distributed among the principal inhabitants gratis; and as soon as I could suppose their minds a little prepared by the perusal of it, I set on foot a subscription for opening and supporting an academy; it was to be paid in quotas yearly for five years; by so dividing it, I judg'd the subscription might be larger, and I believe it was so, amounting to no less, if I remember right, than five thousand pounds.

In the introduction to these proposals, I stated their publication, not as an act of mine, but of some *publick-spirited gentlemen*, avoiding as much as I could, according to my usual rule, the presenting myself to the publick as the author of any scheme for their benefit.

The subscribers, to carry the project into immediate execution, chose out of their number twenty-four trustees, and appointed Mr. Francis, then attorney-general, and myself to draw up constitutions for the government of the academy; which being done and signed, a house was hired, masters engag'd, and the schools opened, I think, in the same year, 1749. . . .

*(Early history of the academy, later to become the University of Pennsylvania; appointments as deputy postmaster general of the colonies in 1753; M.A. degrees from Harvard and Yale; Franklin's proposal of the Albany Plan of Union for the colonies in 1754; his assistance to General Braddock, 1755-1756; observations on Moravians.)*

In 1746, being at Boston, I met there with a Dr. Spence, who was lately arrived from Scotland, and show'd me some electric experiments. They were imperfectly perform'd, as he was not very expert; but, being on a subject quite new to me, they equally surpris'd and pleased me. Soon after my return to Philadelphia, our library company receiv'd from Mr. P. Collinson, Fellow of the Royal Society of London, a present of a glass tube, with some account of the use of it in making such experiments. I eagerly seized the opportunity of repeating what I had seen at Boston; and, by much practice, acquir'd great readiness in performing those, also, which we had an account of from England, adding a number of new ones. I say much practice, for my house was con-

tinually full, for some time, with people who came to see these new wonders.

To divide a little this incumbrance among my friends, I caused a number of similar tubes to be blown at our glass-house, with which they furnish'd themselves, so that we had at length several performers. Among these, the principal was Mr. Kinnersley, an ingenious neighbor, who, being out of business, I encouraged to undertake showing the experiments for money, and drew up for him two lectures, in which the experiments were rang'd in such order, and accompanied with such explanations in such method, as that the foregoing should assist in comprehending the following. He procur'd an elegant apparatus for the purpose, in which all the little machines that I had roughly made for myself were nicely form'd by instrument-makers. His lectures were well attended, and gave great satisfaction; and after some time he went thro' the colonies, exhibiting them in every capital town, and pick'd up some money. In the West India Islands, indeed, it was with difficulty the experiments could be made, from the general moisture of the air.

Oblig'd as we were to Mr. Collinson for his present of the tube, etc., I thought it right he should be inform'd of our success in using it, and wrote him several letters containing accounts of our experiments. He got them read in the Royal Society, where they were not at first thought worth so much notice as to be printed in their Transactions. One paper, which I wrote for Mr. Kinnersley, on the sameness of lightning with electricity, I sent to Dr. Mitchel, an acquaintance of mine, and one of the members also of that society, who wrote me word that it had been read, but was laugh'd at by the connoisseurs. The papers, however, being shown to Dr. Fothergill, he thought them of too much value to be stifled, and advis'd the printing of them. Mr. Collinson then gave them to Cave for publication in his *Gentleman's Magazine*; but he chose to print them separately in a pamphlet, and Dr. Fothergill wrote the preface. Cave, it seems, judg'd rightly for his profit, for by the additions that arriv'd afterward they swell'd, to a quarto volume, which has had five editions, and cost him nothing for copy-money.

It was, however, some time before those papers were much taken notice of in England. A copy of them happening to fall into the hands of the Count de Buffon, a philosopher deservedly of great reputa-



tion in France, and, indeed, all over Europe, he prevailed with M. Dalibard to translate them into French, and they were printed at Paris. The publication offended the Abbé Nollet, preceptor in Natural Philosophy to the royal family, and an able experimenter, who had form'd and publish'd a theory of electricity, which then had the general vogue. He could not at first believe that such a work came from America, and said it must have been fabricated by his enemies at Paris, to décry his system. Afterwards, having been assur'd that there really existed such a person as Franklin at Philadelphia, which he had doubted, he wrote and published a volume of Letters, chiefly address'd to me, defending his theory, and denying the verity of my experiments, and of the positions deduc'd from them.

I once purpos'd answering the abbé, and actually began the answer; but, on consideration that my writings contain'd a description of experiments which any one might repeat and verify, and if not to be verifi'd, could not be defended; or of observations offer'd as conjectures, and not delivered dogmatically, therefore not laying me under any obligation to defend them; and reflecting that a dispute between two persons, writing in different languages, might be lengthened greatly by mistranslations, and thence misconceptions of one another's meaning, much of one of the abbé's letters being founded on an error in the translation, I concluded to let my papers shift for themselves, believing it was better to spend what time I could spare from public business in making new experiments, than in disputing about those already made. I therefore never answered M. Nollet, and the event gave me no cause to repent my silence; for my friend M. le Roy, of the Royal Academy of Sciences, took up my cause and refuted him; my book was translated into the Italian, German, and Latin languages; and the doctrine it contain'd was by degrees universally adopted by the philosophers of Europe, in preference to that of the abbé; so that he lived to see himself the last of his sect, except Monsieur B——, of Paris, his élève<sup>27</sup> and immediate disciple.

<sup>27</sup> Student.

What gave my book the more sudden and general celebrity, was the success of one of its proposed experiments, made by Messrs. Dalibard and De Lor at Marly, for drawing lightning from the clouds. This engag'd the public attention every where. M. de Lor, who had an apparatus for experimental philosophy, and lectur'd in that branch of science, undertook to repeat what he called the *Philadelphia Experiments*; and, after they were performed before the king and court, all the curious of Paris flocked to see them. I will not swell this narrative with an account of that capital experiment, nor of the infinite pleasure I receiv'd in the success of a similar one I made soon after with a kite at Philadelphia, as both are to be found in the histories of electricity.

Dr. Wright, an English physician, when at Paris, wrote to a friend, who was of the Royal Society, an account of the high esteem my experiments were in among the learned abroad, and of their wonder that my writings had been so little noticed in England. The Society, on this, resum'd the consideration of the letters that had been read to them; and the celebrated Dr. Watson drew up a summary account of them, and of all I had afterwards sent to England on the subject, which he accompanied with some praise of the writer. This summary was then printed in their Transactions; and some members of the Society in London, particularly the very ingenious Mr. Canton, having verified the experiment of procuring lightning from the clouds by a pointed rod, and acquainting them with the success, they soon made me more than amends for the slight with which they had before treated me. Without my having made any application for that honour, they chose me a member, and voted that I should be excus'd the customary payments, which would have amounted to twenty-five guineas; and ever since have given me their Transactions gratis. They also presented me with the gold medal of Sir Godfrey Copley for the year 1753, the delivery of which was accompanied by a very handsome speech of the president, Lord Macclesfield, wherein I was highly honoured. . . .

[Account of his second trip to England, 1757, as colonial agent for Pennsylvania, in the midst of which the Autobiography abruptly ends.]



*Dogood Papers*

## NO. V

(From Monday May 21. to Monday May 28. 1722.)

*Mulier Muliere magis congruet.* TER.<sup>28</sup>*To the Author of the New-England Courant.*

Sir,

I shall here present your Readers with a Letter from one, who informs me that I have begun at the wrong End of my Business, and that I ought to begin at Home, and censure the Vices and Follies of my own Sex, before I venture to meddle with your's: Nevertheless, I am resolved to dedicate this Speculation to the Fair Tribe, and endeavour to show, that Mr. Ephraim charges Women with being particularly guilty of Pride, Idleness, &c. wrongfully, inasmuch as the Men have not only as great a Share in those Vices as the Women, but are likewise in a great Measure the Cause of that which the Women are guilty of. I think it will be best to produce my Antagonist, before I encounter him.

*To Mrs. Dogood.*

Madam,

My Design in troubling you with this Letter is, to desire you would begin with your own Sex first: Let the first Volley of your Resentments be directed against *Female Vice*; let Female Idleness, Ignorance and Folly, (which are Vices more peculiar to your Sex than to our's,) be the Subject of your Satyrs, but more especially Female Pride, which I think is intolerable. Here is a large Field that wants Cultivation, and which I believe you are able (if willing) to improve with Advantage; and when you have once reformed the Women, you will find it a much easier Task to reform the Men, because Women are the prime Causes of a great many Male Enormities. This is all at present from

*Your Friendly Wellwisher,*

Ephraim Censorious.

After Thanks to my Correspondent for his Kindness in cutting out Work for me, I must assure him, that I find it a very difficult Matter to reprove Women separate from the Men; for what Vice is

<sup>28</sup> "A woman deals much better with a woman."—Terence, *Phormio*, V, i, 1.

there in which the Men have not as great a Share as the Women? and in some have they not a far greater, as in Drunkenness, Swearing, &c.? And if they have, then it follows, that when a Vice is to be reprov'd, Men, who are most culpable, deserve the most Reprehension, and certainly therefore, ought to have it. But will wave this point at present, and proceed to a particular Consideration of what my Correspondent calls *Female Vice*.

As for Idleness, if I should *Quære*,<sup>29</sup> Where are the greatest Number of its Votaries to be found, with us or the Men? it might I believe be easily and truly answer'd, *With the latter*. For, notwithstanding the Men are commonly complaining how hard they are forc'd to labour, only to maintain their Wives in Pomp and Idleness, yet if you go among the Women, you will learn, that *they have always more Work upon their Hands than they are able to do*, and that *a Woman's Work is never done*, &c. But however,

<sup>20</sup> Suppose we should grant for once, that we are generally more idle than the Men, (without making any Allowance for the *Weakness of the Sex*,) I desire to know whose Fault it is? Are not the Men to blame for their Folly in maintaining us in Idleness? Who is there that can be handsomely supported in Affluence, Ease and Pleasure by another, that will chuse rather to earn his Bread by the Sweat of his own Brows? And if a Man will be so fond and so foolish, as to labour hard himself for a Livelihood, and suffer his Wife in the mean Time to sit in Ease and Idleness, let him not blame her if she does so, for it is in a great Measure his own Fault.

And now for the Ignorance and Folly which he reproaches us with, let us see (if we are Fools and Ignoramus's) whose is the Fault, the Men's or our's. An ingenious Writer, having this Subject in Hand, has the following Words, wherein he lays the Fault wholly on the Men, for not allowing Women the Advantages of Education.

<sup>40</sup> "I have (says he) often thought of it as one of the most barbarous Customs in the World, considering us as a civiliz'd and Christian Country, that we deny the Advantages of Learning to Women. We reprove the Sex every Day with Folly and Impertinence, while I am confident, had they the Advantages

<sup>29</sup> Ask or inquire.

of Education equal to us, they would be guilty of less than our selves. One would wonder indeed how it should happen that Women are conversible at all, since they are only beholding to natural Parts for all their Knowledge. Their Youth is spent to teach them to stitch and sow, or make Baubles. They are taught to read indeed, and perhaps to write their Names, or so; and that is the Height of a Womans Education. And I would but ask any who slight the Sex for their Understanding, What is a Man (a Gentleman, I <sup>10</sup> mean) good for that is taught no more? If Knowledge and Understanding had been useless Additions to the Sex, God Almighty would never have given them Capacities, for he made nothing Needless. What has the Woman done to forfeit the Privilege of being taught? Does she plague us with her Pride and Impertinence? Why did we not let her learn, that she might have had more Wit? Shall we upraid Women with Folly, when 'tis only the Error of this inhumane Custom that hindred them being made wiser."

So much for Female Ignorance and Folly; and now let us a little consider the Pride which my Correspondent thinks is *intolerable*. By this Expression of his, one would think he is some dejected Swain, tyranniz'd over by some cruel haughty Nymph, who (perhaps he thinks) has no more Reason to be proud than himself. *Alas-a-day!* What shall we say in this Case! Why truly, if Women are proud, it is certainly owing to the Men still; for if they will be such *Simpletons* as to humble themselves at their Feet, and fill <sup>30</sup> their credulous Ears with extravagant Praises of their Wit, Beauty, and other Accomplishments (perhaps where there are none too,) and when Women are by this Means perswaded that they are Something more than humane, what Wonder is it, if they carry themselves haughtily, and live extravagantly. Notwithstanding, I believe there are more Instances of extravagant Pride to be found among Men than among Women, and this Fault is certainly more hainous in the former than in the latter.

Upon the whole, I conclude, that it will be impossible to lash any Vice, of which the Men, are not equally guilty with the Women, and consequently deserve an equal (if not a greater) Share in the Censure. However, I exhort both to amend, where both are culpable, otherwise they may expect to be severely handled by Sir,

Your Humble Servant,  
Silence Dogood.

N. B. Mrs. Dogood has lately left her Seat in the Country, and come to Boston, where she intends to tarry for the Summer Season, in order to compleat her Observations of the present reigning Vices of the Town.

NO. VII

(From Monday June 18. to Monday June 25. 1722.)

*Give me the Muse, whose generous Force,  
Impatient of the Reins,  
Pursues an unattempted Course,  
Breaks all the Criticks Iron Chains.*

WATTS.

To the Author of the New-England Courant.

Sir,

It has been the Complaint of many Ingenious Foreigners, who have travell'd amongst us, *That good Poetry is not to be expected in New-England*. I am apt to Fancy, the Reason is, not because our Countrymen are altogether void of a Poetical Genius, nor yet because we have not those Advantages of Education which other Countries have, but purely because we do not afford that Praise and Encouragement which is merited, when any thing extraordinary of this Kind is produc'd among us: Upon which Consideration I have determin'd, when I meet with a Good Piece of *New-England Poetry*, to give it a suitable Encomium, and thereby endeavour to discover to the World some of its Beautys, in order to encourage the Author to go on, and bless the World with more, and more Excellent Productions.

There has lately appear'd among us a most Excellent Piece of Poetry, entituled, *An Elegy upon the much Lamented Death of Mrs. Mchitbell Kitel, Wife of Mr. John Kitel of Salem, Etc.* It may justly be said in its Praise, without Flattery to the Author, that it is the most *Extraordinary* Piece that was ever wrote in *New-England*. The Language is so soft and Easy, the Expression so moving and pathetick, but <sup>40</sup> above all, the Verse and Numbers so Charming and Natural, that it is almost beyond Comparison.

*The Muse disdains \*  
Those Links and Chains,  
Measures and Rules of Vulgar Strains,  
And o'er the Laws of Harmony a Sovereign  
Queen she reigns.*

I find no English Author, Ancient or Modern, whose Elegies may be compar'd with this, in respect

\* Watts.

to the Elegance of Stile, or Smoothness of Rhime; and for the affecting Part, I will leave your Readers to judge, if ever they read any Lincs, that would sooner make them *draw their Breath* and Sigh, if not shed Tears, than these following.

*Come let us mourn, for we have lost a  
Wife, a Daughter, and a Sister,  
Who has lately taken Flight, and  
greatly we have mist her.*

In another place,

*Some little Time before she yielded up her Breath,  
She said, I ne'er shall hear one Sermon more on Earth.  
She kist her Husband some little Time before she expir'd,  
Then lean'd her Head the Pillow on, just out of Breath  
and tir'd.*

But the Threecfold Appellation in the first Line

—A Wife, a Daughter, and a Sister,

must not pass unobserved. That Line in the celebrated *Watts*,

*GUNSTON, the Just, the Generous, and the Young.*

is nothing Comparable to it. The latter only mentions three Qualifications of *one* Person who was deceased, which therefore could raise Grief and Compassion but for *One*. Whereas the former, (*our most excellent Poet*) gives his Reader a Sort of an Idea of the Death of *Three Persons*, viz.

—A Wife, a Daughter, and a Sister,

which is *Three Times* as great a Loss as the Death of *One*, and consequently must raise *Three Times* as much Grief and Compassion in the Reader.

I should be very much straitened for Room, if I should attempt to discover even half the Excellencies of this Elegy which are obvious to me. Yet I cannot omit one Observation, which is, that the Author has (to his Honour) invented a new Species of Poetry, which wants a Name, and was never before known. His muse scorns to be confin'd to the old Measures<sup>40</sup> and Limits, or to observe the dull Rules of Criticks;

*Nor Rapin gives her Rules to fly, nor Purcell  
Notes to Sing.*

WATTS.

Now 'tis Pity that such an Excellent Piece should not be dignify'd with a particular Name; and seeing it cannot justly be called, either *Epic*, *Sapphic*, *Lyric*, or *Pindaric*, nor any other Name yet invented, I pre-

sume it may, (in Honour and Remembrance of the Dead) be called the *KITELIC*. Thus much in the Praise of *Kitelic Poetry*.

It is certain, that those Elegies which are of our own Growth, (and our Soil seldom produces any other sort of Poetry) are by far the greatest part, wretchedly Dull and Ridiculous. Now since it is imagin'd by many, that our Poets are honest, well-meaning Fellows, who do their best, and that if they had but some Instructions how to govern Fancy with Judgment, they would make indifferent good Elegies; I shall here subjoin a Receipt for that purpose, which was left me as a Legacy, (among other valuable Rarities) by my Reverend Husband. It is as follows,

#### A RECEIPT to make a New-England Funeral ELEGY.

For the Title of your Elegy. *Of these you may have  
20 enough ready made to your Hands; but if you should  
chuse to make it your self, you must be sure not to  
omit the words Ætatis Suæ,<sup>30</sup> which will Beautify it  
exceedingly.*

For the Subject of your Elegy. *Take one of your  
Neighbours who has lately departed this Life; it is no  
great matter at what Age the Party dy'd, but it will  
be best if he went away suddenly, being Kill'd,  
Drown'd, or Frosc to Death.*

*Having chose the Person, take all his Virtues, Ex-  
30 cellencies, &c. and if he have not enough, you may  
borrow some to make up a sufficient Quantity: To  
these add his last Words, dying Expressions, &c. if  
they are to be had; mix all these together, and be sure  
you strain them well. Then season all with a Handful  
or two of Melancholly Expressions, such as, Dreadful,  
Deadly, cruel cold Death, unhappy Fate, weeping  
Eyes, &c. Have mixed all these Ingredients well, put  
them into the empty Scull of some young Harvard;  
(but in Case you have ne'er a One at Hand, you may  
use your own,) there let them Ferment for the Space  
of a Fortnight, and by that Time they will be incor-  
porated into a Body, which take out, and having pre-  
pared a sufficient Quantity of double Rhimes, such  
as Power, Flower; Quiver, Shiver; Grieve us, Leave  
us; tell you, excel you; Expeditions, Physicians;  
Fatigue him, Intrigue him; &c. you must spread all  
upon Paper, and if you can procure a Scrap of Latin  
to put at the End, it will garnish it mightily; then*

<sup>30</sup> "Of his (or her) age."

having affixed your Name at the Bottom, with a *Mæstus Composuit*,<sup>31</sup> you will have an Excellent *Elegy*.

N. B. *This Receipt will serve when a Female is the*

<sup>31</sup> "Sorrowfully composed."

*Subject of your Elegy, provided you borrow a greater Quantity of Virtues, Excellencies, &c.*

Sir,

Your Servant,

Silence Dogood.

FROM

## *Articles of Belief and Acts of Religion*

IN TWO PARTS <sup>32</sup>

*Here will I hold. If there is a Pow'r above us,  
(And that there is, all Nature cries aloud,  
Thro' all her Works) He must delight in Virtue;  
And that which he delights in must be Happy.*

CATO.

PART I

Philad<sup>a</sup>, Nov. 20: 1728

### First Principles

I believe there is one supreme, most perfect Being, Author and Father of the Gods themselves. For I believe that Man is not the most perfect Being but one, rather that as there are many Degrees of Beings his Inferiors, so there are many Degrees of Beings superior to him.

Also, when I stretch my Imagination thro' and beyond our System of Planets, beyond the visible fix'd Stars themselves, into that Space that is every Way infinite, and conceive it fill'd with Suns like ours, each with a Chorus of Worlds forever moving round him, then this little Ball on which we move, seems, even in my narrow Imagination, to be almost Nothing, and myself less than nothing, and of no sort of Consequence.

When I think thus, I imagine it great Vanity in me to suppose, that the *Supremely Perfect* does in the least regard such an inconsiderable Nothing as Man. More especially, since it is impossible for me to have any positive clear idea of that which is infinite and incomprehensible, I cannot conceive otherwise than that he *the Infinite Father* expects or requires no Worship or Praise from us, but that he is even infinitely above it.

But, since there is in all Men something like a

<sup>32</sup> No second part has been found.

natural principle, which inclines them to DEVOTION, or the Worship of some unseen Power;

And since Men are endued with Reason superior to all other Animals, that we are in our World acquainted with;

Therefore I think it seems required of me, and my Duty as a Man, to pay Divine Regards to SOMETHING.

I conceive then, that the INFINITE has created many beings or Gods, vastly superior to Man, who can better conceive his Perfections than we, and return him a more rational and glorious Praise.

As, among Men, the Praise of the Ignorant or of Children is not regarded by the ingenious Painter or Architect, who is rather honour'd and pleas'd with the approbation of Wise Men & Artists.

It may be that these created Gods are immortal; or it may be that after many Ages, they are changed, and others Supply their Places.

Howbeit, I conceive that each of these is exceeding wise and good, and very powerful; and that Each has made for himself one glorious Sun, attended with a beautiful and admirable System of Planets.

It is that particular Wise and good God, who is the author and owner of our System, that I propose for the object of my praise and adoration.

For I conceive that he has in himself some of those Passions he has planted in us, and that, since he has given us Reason whereby we are capable of observing his Wisdom in the Creation, he is not above caring for us, being pleas'd with our Praise, and offended when we slight Him, or neglect his Glory.

I conceive for many Reasons, that he is a good *Being*, and as I should be happy to have so wise, good, and powerful a Being my Friend, let me consider in what manner I shall make myself most acceptable to him.

Next to the Praise resulting from and due to his Wisdom, I believe he is pleas'd and delights in the Happiness of those he has created; and since without

Virtue Man can have no Happiness in this World, I firmly believe he delights to see me Virtuous, because he is pleased when he sees Me Happy.

And since he has created many Things, which seem purely design'd for the Delight of Man, I believe he is not offended, when he sees his Children solace themselves in any manner of pleasant exercises and Innocent Delights; and I think no Pleasure innocent, that is to Man hurtful.

I love him therefore for his Goodness, and I adore <sup>10</sup> him for his Wisdom.

Let me then not fail to praise my God continually, for it is his Due, and it is all I can return for his many Favours and great Goodness to me; and let me resolve to be virtuous, that I may be happy, that I may please Him, who is delighted to see me happy. Amen!

### *A Witch Trial at Mount Holly* <sup>33</sup>

Saturday last, at Mount-Holly, about 8 Miles from this Place [Burlington, N. J.] near 300 People were gathered together to see an Experiment or two tried on some Persons accused of Witchcraft. It seems the Accused had been charged with making their Neighbours' Sheep dance in an uncommon Manner, and with causing Hogs to speak and sing Psalms, etc., to the great Terror and Amazement of the king's good and peaceable Subjects in this Province; and the Accusers, being very positive that if the Accused were weighed in Scales against a Bible, the Bible would prove too heavy for them; or that, if they were bound and put into the River they would swim; the said Accused, desirous to make Innocence appear, voluntarily offered to undergo the said Trials if 2 of the most violent of their Accusers would be tried with them. Accordingly the Time and Place was agreed on and advertised about the Country; The Accusers were 1 Man and 1 Woman: and the Accused the same. The Parties being met and the People got together, a <sup>40</sup> grand Consultation was held, before they proceeded to Trial; in which it was agreed to use the Scales first; and a Committee of Men were appointed to search the Men, and a Committee of Women to search the Women, to see if they had any Thing of Weight about them, particularly Pins. After the Scrutiny was over a huge great Bible belonging to the

Justice of the Place was provided, and a Lane through the Populace was made from the Justice's House to the Scales, which were fixed on a Gallows erected for that Purpose opposite to the House, that the Justice's Wife and the rest of the Ladies might see the Trial without coming amongst the Mob, and after the Manner of Moorfields a large Ring was also made. Then came out of the House a grave, tall Man carrying the Holy Writ before the supposed Wizard etc, (as solemnly as the Sword-bearer of London before the Lord Mayor) the Wizard was first put in the Scale, and over him was read a Chapter out of the Books of Moses, and then the Bible was put in the other Scale, (which, being kept down before) was immediately let go; but, to the great Surprise of the Spectators, Flesh and Bones came down plump, and outweighed that great good Book by abundance. After the same Manner the others were served, and their Lumps of Mortality severally were too heavy for <sup>20</sup> Moses and all the Prophets and Apostles. This being over, the Accusers and the rest of the Mob, not satisfied with this Experiment, would have the Trial by Water. Accordingly a most solemn Procession was made to the Mill-pond, where both Accused and Accusers being stripped (saving only to the Women their Shifts) were bound Hand and Foot and severally placed in the Water, lengthways, from the Side of a Barge or Flat, having for Security only a Rope about the Middle of each, which was held by some in the Flat. The accused man being thin and spare with some Difficulty began to sink at last; but the rest, every one of them, swam very light upon the Water. A Sailor in the Flat jump'd out upon the Back of the Man accused thinking to drive him down to the Bottom; but the Person bound, without any Help, came up some time before the other. The Woman Accuser being told that she did not sink, would be duck'd a second Time; when she swam again as light as before. Upon which she declared, <sup>30</sup> That she believed the Accused had bewitched her to make her so light, and that she would be duck'd again a Hundred Times but she would duck the Devil out of her. The Accused Man, being surpriz'd at his own Swimming, was not so confident of his Innocence as before, but said, 'If I am a Witch, it is more than I know.' The more thinking Part of the Spectators were of Opinion that any Person so bound and placed in the Water (unless they were mere Skin and Bones) would swim, till their Breath was gone, and

<sup>33</sup> Originally printed in the *Pennsylvania Gazette*, October 22, 1730.

their Lungs fill'd with Water. But it being the general Belief of the Populace that the Women's shifts and the Garters with which they were bound help'd to support them, it is said they are to be tried again the next warm Weather, naked.

### *The Speech of Polly Baker* <sup>34</sup>

The Speech of Miss Polly Baker before a Court of Judicature, at Connecticut near Boston in New Eng-<sup>10</sup> land; where she was prosecuted the fifth time, for having a Bastard Child: Which influenced the Court to dispense with her Punishment, and which induced one of her Judges to marry her the next Day—by whom she had fifteen Children.

"May it please the honourable bench to indulge me in a few words: I am a poor, unhappy woman, who have no money to fee lawyers to plead for me, being hard put to it to get a living. I shall not trouble your honours with long speeches; for I have not the<sup>20</sup> presumption to expect that you may, by any means, be prevailed on to deviate in your Sentence from the law, in my favour. All I humbly hope is, that your honours would charitably move the governor's goodness on my behalf, that my fine may be remitted. This is the fifth time, gentlemen, that I have been dragg'd before your court on the same account; twice I have paid heavy fines, and twice have been brought to publick punishment, for want of money to pay those fines. This may have been agreeable to the laws,<sup>30</sup> and I don't dispute it; but since laws are sometimes unreasonable in themselves, and therefore repealed; and others bear too hard on the subject in particular circumstances, and therefore there is left a power somewhere to dispense with the execution of them; I take the liberty to say, that I think this law, by which I am punished, both unreasonable in itself, and particularly severe with regard to me, who have always lived an inoffensive life in the neighbourhood where I was born, and defy my enemies (if I have any) to<sup>40</sup> say I ever wrong'd any man, woman, or child. Abstracted from the law, I cannot conceive (may it please your honours) what the nature of my offense is. I have brought five fine children into the world, at the risque of my life; I have maintain'd them well by my own industry, without burthening the township,

and would have done it better, if it had not been for the heavy charges and fines I have paid. Can it be a crime (in the nature of things, I mean) to add to the king's subjects, in a new country, that really wants people? I own it, I should think it rather a praiseworthy than a punishable action. I have debauched no other woman's husband, nor enticed any other youth; these things I never was charg'd with; nor has any one the least cause of complaint against me, unless, perhaps, the ministers of justice, because I have had children without being married, by which they have missed a wedding fee. But can this be a fault of mine? I appeal to your honours. You are pleased to allow I don't want sense; but I must be stupified to the last degree, not to prefer the honourable state of wedlock to the condition I have lived in. I always was, and still am willing to enter into it; and doubt not my behaving well in it, having all the industry, frugality, fertility, and skill in economy appertaining to a good wife's character. I defy any one to say I ever refused an offer of that sort: on the contrary, I readily consented to the only proposal of marriage that ever was made me, which was when I was a virgin, but too easily confiding in the person's sincerity that made it, I unhappily lost my honour by trusting to his; for he got me with child, and then forsook me.

"That very person, you all know, he is now become a magistrate of this country; and I had hopes he would have appeared this day on the bench, and have endcavoured to moderate the Court in my favour; then I should have scorn'd to have mentioned it; but I must now complain of it, as unjust and unequal, that my betrayer and undoer, the first cause of all my faults and miscarriages (if they must be deemed such), should be advanced to honour and power in this government that punishes my misfortunes with stripes and infamy. I should be told, 'tis like, that were there no act of Assembly in the case, the precepts of religion are violated by my transgressions. If mine is a religious offense, leave it to religious punishments. You have already excluded me from the comforts of your church communion. Is not that sufficient? You believe I have offended heaven, and must suffer eternal fire: Will not that be sufficient? What need is there then of your additional fines and whipping? I own I do not think as you do, for, if I thought what you call a sin was really such, I could not presumptuously commit it. But, how can it be believed that heaven is angry at my having chil-

<sup>34</sup> Printed in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for April, 1747; this *jeu d'esprit* of Franklin's was several times reprinted as an authentic document.

dren, when to the little done by me towards it, God has been pleased to add his divine skill and admirable workmanship in the formation of their bodies, and crowned the whole by furnishing them with rational and immortal souls?

"Forgive me, gentlemen, if I talk a little extravagantly on these matters; I am no divine, but if you, gentlemen, must be making laws, do not turn natural and useful actions into crimes by your prohibitions. But take into your wise consideration the great and growing number of batchelors in the country, many of whom, from the mean fear of the expences of a family, have never sincerely and honourably courted a woman in their lives; and by their manner of living leave unproduced (which is little better than murder) hundreds of their posterity to the thousandth generation. Is not this a greater offense against the publick good than mine? Compel them, then, by law, either to marriage, or to pay double the fine of fornication every year. What must poor young women do, whom customs and nature forbid to solicit the men, and who cannot force themselves upon husbands when the laws take no care to provide them any, and yet severely punish them if they do their duty without them; the duty of the first and great command of nature and nature's God, *encrease and multiply*; a duty, from the steady performance of which nothing has been able to deter me, but for its sake I have hazarded the loss of the publick esteem, and have frequently endured publick disgrace and punishment; and therefore ought, in my humble opinion, instead of a whipping, to have a statue erected to my memory."

### *To Peter Collinson*<sup>35</sup>

Electrical Kite

[Philadelphia] Oct. 19, 1752.

Sir,

As frequent mention is made in public papers from *Europe* of the success of the *Philadelphia* experiment for drawing the electric fire from clouds by means of pointed rods of iron erected on high buildings, &c., it may be agreeable to the curious to be

<sup>35</sup> This communication was read before the Royal Society on December 21, 1752, and printed in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for December, 1752. The identification of electricity and lightning is what was chiefly responsible for Franklin's receiving the Copley Medal in 1753 and his election as Fellow of the Royal Society in 1756. See Franklin's own account at the conclusion of the *Autobiography*.

informed, that the same experiment has succeeded in *Philadelphia*, though made in a different and more easy manner, which is as follows:

Make a small cross of two light strips of cedar, the arms so long as to reach to the four corners of a large thin silk handkerchief when extended; tie the corners of the handkerchief to the extremities of the cross, so you have the body of a kite; which being properly accommodated with a tail, loop, and string, will rise in the air, like those made of paper; but this being of silk, is fitter to bear the wet and wind of a thunder-gust without tearing. To the top of the upright stick of the cross is to be fixed a very sharp-pointed wire, rising a foot or more above the wood. To the end of the twine, next the hand, is to be tied a silk ribbon, and where the silk and twine join, a key may be fastened. This kite is to be raised when a thunder-gust appears to be coming on, and the person who holds the string must stand within a door or window, or under some cover, so that the silk ribbon may not be wet; and care must be taken that the twine does not touch the frame of the door or window. As soon as any of the thunder-clouds come over the kite, the pointed wire will draw the electric fire from them, and the kite, with all the twine, will be electrified, and the loose filaments of the twine will stand out every way, and be attracted by an approaching finger. And when the rain has wet the kite and twine, so that it can conduct the electric fire freely, you will find it stream out plentifully from the key on the approach of your knuckle. At this key the phial may be charged; and from electric fire thus obtained, spirits may be kindled, and all the other electric experiments be performed, which are usually done by the help of a rubbed glass globe or tube, and thereby the sameness of the electric matter with that of lightning completely demonstrated.

B. Franklin.

### *The Way to Wealth*<sup>36</sup>

Courteous Reader,

I have heard that nothing gives an Author so great Pleasure, as to find his Works respectfully quoted by

<sup>36</sup> First published as the Preface to *Poor Richard's Almanac* for 1758, this clever compilation of Poor Richard's sayings is at once the best known and in many respects the most characteristic of Franklin's writings. It has been said that it is "the American classic *par excellence*," and that it shares with Mrs. Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* the honor of having been translated into more tongues than any other piece of American writing.

other learned Authors. This Pleasure I have seldom enjoyed; for tho' I have been, if I may say it without Vanity, an *eminent Author* of Almanacks annually now a full Quarter of a Century, my Brother Authors in the same Way, for what Reason I know not, have ever been very sparing in their Applauses; and no other Author has taken the least Notice of me, so that did not my Writings produce me some solid *Pudding*, the great Deficiency of *Praise* would have quite discouraged me.

I concluded at length, that the People were the best Judges of my Merit; for they buy my Works; and besides, in my Rambles, where I am not personally known, I have frequently heard one or other of my Adages repeated, with, as *Poor Richard* says, at the End on't; this gave me some Satisfaction, as it showed not only that my Instructions were regarded, but discovered likewise some Respect for my Authority; and I own, that to encourage the Practice of remembering and repeating those wise Sentences, 20 I have sometimes *quoted* myself with great Gravity.

Judge then how much I must have been gratified by an Incident I am going to relate to you. I stopt my Horse lately where a great Number of People were collected at a Vendue of Merchant Goods. The Hour of Sale not being come, they were conversing on the Badness of the Times, and one of the Company call'd to a plain clean old Man, with white Locks, *Pray, Father Abraham, what think you of the Times? Won't these heavy Taxes quite ruin the Country? How shall we ever be able to pay them? What would you advise us to?*—Father Abraham stood up, and reply'd, If you'd have my Advice, I'll give it you in short, for a *Word to the Wise is enough*, and *many Words won't fill a Bushel*, as *Poor Richard* says. They join'd in desiring him to speak his Mind, and gathering round him, he proceeded as follows;

"Friends, says he, and Neighbours, the Taxes are 40 indeed very heavy, and if those laid on by the Government were the only Ones we had to pay, we might more easily discharge them; but we have many others, and much more grievous to some of us. We are taxed twice as much by our *Idleness*, three times as much by our *Pride*, and four times as much by our *Folly*, and from these Taxes the Commissioners cannot ease or deliver us by allowing an Abatement. However let us hearken to good Advice, and something may be

done for us; *God helps them that help themselves*, as *Poor Richard* says, in his Almanack of 1733.

It would be thought a hard Government that should tax its People one tenth Part of their *Time*, to be employed in its Service. But *Idleness* taxes many of us much more, if we reckon all that is spent in absolute *Sloth*, or doing of nothing, with that which is spent in idle Employments or Amusements, that amount to nothing. *Sloth*, by bringing on Dis- 10 cases, absolutely shortens Life. *Sloth, like Rust, consumes faster than Labour wears, while the used Key is always bright*, as *Poor Richard* says. But *dost thou love Life, then do not squander Time, for that's the Stuff Life is made of*, as *Poor Richard* says.—How much more than is necessary do we spend in Sleep! forgetting that *The sleeping Fox catches no Poultry*, and that *there will be sleeping enough in the Grave*, as *Poor Richard* says. If Time be of all Things the most precious, *wasting Time* must be, as *Poor Richard* says, *the greatest Prodigality*, since, as he else- 20 where tells us, *Lost Time is never found again*; and what we call *Time-enough*, always proves little enough: Let us then up and be doing, and doing to the Purpose; so by Diligence shall we do more with less Perplexity. *Sloth makes all Things difficult, but Industry all easy*, as *Poor Richard* says; and *He that riseth late, must trot all Day, and shall scarce overtake his Business at Night*. While *Laziness travels so slowly, that Poverty soon overtakes him*, as we read in *Poor Richard*, who adds, *Drive thy Business, let not that drive thee*; and *Early to Bed, and early to rise, makes a Man healthy, wealthy and wise*.

So what signifies *wishing* and *hoping* for better Times. We may make these Times better if we bestir ourselves. *Industry need not wish*, as *Poor Richard* says, and *He that lives upon Hope will die fasting*. *There are no Gains, without Pains*; then *Help Hands, for I have no Lands*, or if I have, they are smartly taxed. And, as *Poor Richard* likewise observes, *He that hath a Trade hath an Estate*, and *He that hath a Calling, hath an Office of Profit and Honour*; but then the *Trade* must be worked at, and the *Calling* well followed, or neither the *Estate*, nor the *Office*, will enable us to pay our Taxes.—If we are industrious we shall never starve; for, as *Poor Richard* says, *At the working Man's House Hunger looks in, but dares not enter*. Nor will the Bailiff or the Constable enter, for *Industry pays Debts, while Despair encreaseth them*, says *Poor Richard*.—What though



you have found no Treasure, nor has any rich Relation left you a Legacy, *Diligence is the Mother of Good luck*, as Poor Richard says, and God gives all Things to Industry. Then *plough deep, while Sluggards sleep, and you shall have Corn to sell and to keep*, says Poor Dick. Work while it is called To-day, for you know not how much you may be hindered To-morrow, which makes Poor Richard say, *One To-day is worth two To-morrows*; and farther, *Have you somewhat to do To-morrow, do it To-day*. If <sup>10</sup> you were a Servant, would you not be ashamed that a good Master should catch you idle? Are you then your own Master, *be ashamed to catch yourself idle*, as Poor Dick says. When there is so much to be done for yourself, your Family, your Country, and your gracious King, be up by Peep of Day; *Let not the Sun look down and say, Inglorious here he lies*. Handle your Tools without Mittens; remember that *the Cat in Gloves catches no Mice*, as Poor Richard says. 'Tis true there is much to be done, and perhaps <sup>20</sup> you are weak handed, but stick to it steadily, and you will see great Effects, for *constant Dropping wears away Stones*, and by *Diligence and Patience the Mouse ate in two the Cable*; and *little Strokes fell great Oaks*, as Poor Richard says in his Almanack, the Year I cannot just now remember.

Methinks I hear some of you say, *Must a Man afford himself no Leisure?*—I will tell thee, my Friend, what Poor Richard says, *Employ thy Time well if thou meanest to gain Leisure*; and *since thou art not sure of a Minute, throw not away an Hour*. Leisure, is Time for doing something useful; this Leisure the diligent Man will obtain, but the lazy Man never; so that, as Poor Richard says, *a Life of Leisure and a Life of Laziness are two Things*. Do you imagine that Sloth will afford you more Comfort than Labour? No, for as Poor Richard says, *Trouble springs from Idleness, and grievous Toil from needless Ease*. Many without Labour, would live by <sup>30</sup> their wits only, but they break for want of Stock. <sup>40</sup> Whereas Industry gives Comfort, and Plenty, and Respect: *Fly Pleasures, and they'll follow you*. *The diligent Spinner has a large Shift*; and now I have a Sheep and a Cow, every Body bids me Good morrow; all which is well said by Poor Richard.

But with our Industry, we must likewise be steady, settled and careful, and oversee our own Affairs with our own Eyes, and not trust too much to others; for, as Poor Richard says,

*I never saw an oft removed Tree,  
Nor yet an oft removed Family,  
That throve so well as those that settled be.*

And again, *Three Removes is as bad as a Fire*; and again, *Keep thy Shop, and thy Shop will keep thee*; and again, *If you would have your Business done, go; If not, send*. And again,

*He that by the Plough would thrive,  
Himself must either hold or drive.*

And again, *The Eye of a Master will do more Work than both his Hands*; and again, *Want of Care does us more Damage than Want of Knowledge*; and again, *Not to oversee Workmen, is to leave them your Purse open*. Trusting too much to others Care is the Ruin of many; for, as the Almanack says, *In the Affairs of this World, Men are saved, not by Faith, but by the Want of it*; but a Man's own Care is profitable; for, saith Poor Dick, *Learning is to the Studious, and Riches to the Careful*, as well as *Power to the Bold, and Heaven to the Virtuous*. And farther, *If you would have a faithful Servant, and one that you like, serve yourself*. And again, he adviseth to Circumspection and Care, even in the smallest Matters, because sometimes *a little Neglect may breed great Mischief*; adding, *For want of a Nail the Shoe was lost; for want of a Shoe the Horse was lost; and for want of a Horse the Rider was lost*, being overtaken and slain by the Enemy, all for want of Care about a Horse shoe Nail.

So much for Industry, my Friends, and Attention to one's own Business; but to these we must add Frugality, if we would make our Industry more certainly successful. A Man may, if he knows not how to save as he gets, *keep his Nose all his Life to the Grindstone*, and die not worth a Groat at last. *A fat Kitchen makes a lean Will*, as Poor Richard says; and,

*Many Estates are spent in the Getting,  
Since Women for Tea forsook Spinning and Knitting,  
And Men for Punch forsook Hewing and Splitting.*

If you would be wealthy, says he, in another Almanack, *think of Saving as well as of Getting*: *The Indies have not made Spain rich, because her Out-goes are greater than her Incomes*. Away then with your expensive Follies, and you will not have so much Cause to complain of hard Times, heavy Taxes, and chargeable Families; for, as Poor Dick says,

*Women and Wine, Game and Deceit,  
Make the Wealth small, and the Wants great.*

And farther, *What maintains one Vice, would bring up two Children.* You may think perhaps, That a little Tea, or a little Punch now and then, Diet a little more costly, Clothes a little finer, and a little Entertainment now and then, can be no great Matter; but remember what *Poor Richard* says, *Many a Little makes a Mickle*; and farther, *Beware of little Expences; a small Leak will sink a great Ship*; and again, *Who Dainties love, shall Beggars prove*; and moreover, *Fools make Feasts, and wise Men eat them.*

Here you are all got together at this Vendue of *Fineries* and *Knicknacks*. You call them *Goods*, but if you do not take Care, they will prove *Evils* to some of you. You expect they will be sold *cheap*, and perhaps they may for less than they cost; but if you have no Occasion for them, they must be *dear* to you. Remember what *Poor Richard* says, *Buy what thou hast no Need of, and ere long thou shalt sell thy Necessaries.* And again, *At a great Pennyworth pause a while*: He means, that perhaps the Cheapness is *apparent* only, and not *real*; or the Bargain, by straitning thee in thy Business, may do thee more Harm than Good. For in another place he says, *Many have been ruined by buying good Pennyworths.* Again, *Poor Richard* says, *'Tis foolish to lay out Money in a Purchase of Repentance*; and yet this Folly is practised every Day at Vendues, for want of minding the Almanack. *Wise Men*, as *Poor Dick* says, *learn by others Harms, Fools scarcely by their own*; but *Felix quem faciunt aliena Pericula cautum*.<sup>37</sup> Many a one, for the Sake of Finery on the Back, have gone with a hungry Belly, and half starved their Families; *Silks and Sattins, Scarlet and Velvets*, as *Poor Richard* says, *put out the Kitchen Fire*. These are not the *Necessaries* of Life; they can scarcely be called the *Conveniencies*, and yet only because they look pretty, how many *want* to have them. The *artificial* Wants of Mankind thus become more numerous than the *natural*; and, as *Poor Dick* says, *For one poor Person, there are an hundred indigent*. By these, and other Extravagancies, the Genteel are reduced to Poverty, and forced to borrow of those whom they formerly despised, but who through In-

*dustry and Frugality* have maintained their Standing; in which Case it appears plainly, that a *Ploughman on his Legs is higher than a Gentleman on his Knees*, as *Poor Richard* says. Perhaps they have had a small Estate left them which they knew not the Getting of; they think *'tis Day, and will never be Night*; that a little to be spent out of so much, is not worth minding; (*a Child and a Fool*, as *Poor Richard* says, *imagine Twenty Shillings and Twenty Years can never be spent*) but, *always taking out of, the Meat-tub, and never putting in, soon comes to the Bottom*; then, as *Poor Dick* says, *When the Well's dry, they know the Worth of Water*. But this they might have known before, if they had taken his Advice; *If you would know the Value of Money, go and try to borrow some*; for, *he that goes a borrowing goes a sorrowing*; and indeed so does he that lends to such People, when he goes to get it in again.—*Poor Dick* farther advises, and says,

*Fond Pride of Dress is sure a very Curse;  
E'er Fancy you consult, consult your Purse.*

And again, *Pride is as loud a Beggar as Want, and a great deal more saucy*. When you have bought one fine Thing you must buy ten more, that your Appearance may be all of a Piece; but *Poor Dick* says, *'Tis easier to suppress the first Desire, than to satisfy all that follow it*. And 'tis as truly Folly for the Poor to ape the Rich, as for the Frog to swell, in order to equal the Ox.

*Great Estates may venture more,  
But little Boats should keep near Shore.*

'Tis however a Folly soon punished; for *Pride that dines on Vanity sups on Contempt*, as *Poor Richard* says. And in another Place, *Pride breakfasted with Plenty, dined with Poverty, and supped with Infamy*. And after all, of what Use is this *Pride of Appearance*, for which so much is risked, so much is suffered? It cannot promote Health, or ease Pain; it makes no Increase of Merit in the Person, it creates Envy, it hastens Misfortune.

*What is a Butterfly? At best  
He's but a Caterpillar drest.  
The gaudy Fop's his Picture just,*

as *Poor Richard* says.

<sup>37</sup> Fortunate is he who is made wary by the mistakes of others.

But what Madness must it be to *run in Debt* for these Superfluities! We are offered, by the Terms of this Vendue, *Six Months Credit*; and that perhaps has induced some of us to attend it, because we cannot spare the ready Money, and hope now to be fine without it. But, ah, think what you do when you run in Debt; *You give to another, Power over your Liberty*. If you cannot pay at the Time, you will be ashamed to see your Creditor; you will be in Fear when you speak to him; you will make poor pitiful sneaking Excuses, and by Degrees come to lose your Veracity, and sink into base downright lying; for, as *Poor Richard* says, *The second Vice is Lying, the first is running in Debt*. And again, to the same Purpose, *Lying rides upon Debt's Back*. Whereas a freeborn *Englishman* ought not to be ashamed or afraid to see or speak to any Man living. But Poverty often deprives a Man of all Spirit and Virtue: *'Tis hard for an empty Bag to stand upright*, as *Poor Richard* truly says. What would you think of that Prince, or that Government, who should issue an Edict forbidding you to dress like a Gentleman or a Gentlewoman, on Pain of Imprisonment or Servitude? Would you not say, that you are free, have a Right to dress as you please, and that such an Edict would be a Breach of your Privileges, and such a Government tyrannical? And yet you are about to put yourself under that Tyranny when you run in Debt for such Dress! Your Creditor has Authority at his Pleasure to deprive you of your Liberty, by confining you in Goal [*sic*] for Life, or to sell you for a Servant, if you should not be able to pay him! When you have got your Bargain, you may, perhaps, think little of Payment; but *Creditors, Poor Richard* tells us, *have better Memories than Debtors*; and in another Place says, *Creditors are a superstitious Sect, great Observers of set Days and Times*. The Day comes round before you are aware, and the Demand is made before you are prepared to satisfy it. Or if you bear your Debt in Mind, the Term which at first seemed so long, will, as it lessens, appear extremely short. *Time* will seem to have added Wings to Heels as well as Shoulders. *Those have a short Lent*, saith *Poor Richard*, *who owe Money to be paid at Easter*. Then since, as he says, *The Borrower is a Slave to the Lender, and the Debtor to the Creditor*, disdain the Chain, preserve your Freedom; and maintain your Independency: *Be industrious and free; be frugal and free*. At pres-

ent, perhaps, you may think yourself in thriving Circumstances, and that you can bear a little Extravagance [*sic*] without Injury;

*For Age and Want, save while you may;  
No Morning Sun lasts a whole Day,*

as *Poor Richard* says—Gain may be temporary and uncertain, but ever while you live, Expence is constant and certain; and *'tis easier to build two Chimnies than to keep one in Fuel*, as *Poor Richard* says. So rather go to Bed supperless than rise in Debt.

*Get what you can, and what you get hold;  
'Tis the Stone that will turn all your Lead into Gold,*

as *Poor Richard* says. And when you have got the Philosopher's Stone, sure you will no longer complain of bad Times, or the Difficulty of paying Taxes.

This Doctrine, my Friends, is *Reason* and *Wisdom*; but after all, do not depend too much upon your own *Industry*, and *Frugality*, and *Prudence*, though excellent Things, for they may all be blasted without the Blessing of Heaven; and therefore ask that Blessing humbly, and be not uncharitable to those that at present seem to want it, but comfort and help them. Remember *Job* suffered, and was afterwards prosperous.

And now to conclude, *Experience keeps a dear School, but Fools will learn in no other, and scarce in that*; for it is true, *we may give Advice, but we cannot give Conduct*, as *Poor Richard* says: However, remember this, *They that won't be counselled, can't be helped*, as *Poor Richard* says: And farther, *That if you will not hear Reason, she'll surely rap your Knuckles*.

Thus the old Gentleman ended his Harangue. The People heard it, and approved the Doctrine and immediately practised the contrary, just as if it had been a common Sermon; for the Vendue opened, and they began to buy extravagantly, notwithstanding all his Cautions, and their own Fear of Taxes.—I found the good Man had thoroughly studied my Almanacks, and digested all I had dropt on those Topicks during the Course of Five-and-twenty Years. The frequent Mention he made of me must have tired any one else, but my Vanity was wonderfully delighted with it, though I was conscious that not a tenth Part of the Wisdom was my own which he ascribed to me, but rather the *Gleanings* I had made

of the Sense of all Ages and Nations. However, I resolved to be the better for the Echo of it; and though I had at first determined to buy Stuff for a new Coat, I went away resolved to wear my old One a little longer. *Reader*, if thou wilt do the same, thy Profit will be as great as mine.

*I am, as ever,*

*Thine to serve thee,*

July 7, 1757.

Richard Saunders.

### *An Edict by the King of Prussia*<sup>38</sup>

Dantzic, Sept. 5, [1773].

We have long wondered here at the supineness of the English nation, under the Prussian impositions upon its trade entering our port. We did not, till lately, know the claims, ancient and modern, that hang over that nation; and therefore could not suspect that it might submit to those impositions from a sense of duty or from principles of equity. The following Edict, just made publick, may, if serious, throw some light upon this matter.

"FREDERIC, by the grace of God, King of Prussia, &c. &c. &c., to all present and to come, (*à tous présens et à venir*,) Health. The peace now enjoyed throughout our dominions, having afforded us leisure to apply ourselves to the regulation of commerce, the improvement of our finances, and at the same time the easing our domestic subjects in their taxes: For these causes, and other good considerations us thereunto moving, we hereby make known, that, after having deliberated these affairs in our council, present our dear brothers, and other great officers of the state, members of the same, we, of our certain knowledge, full power, and authority royal, have made and issued this present Edict, viz.

"Whereas it is well known to all the world, that the first German settlements made in the Island of Britain, were by colonics of people, subject to our renowned ducal ancestors, and drawn from their dominions, under the conduct of Hengist, Horsa, Hella, Uff, Cerdicus, Ida,<sup>39</sup> and others; and that the said colonies have flourished under the protection of

our august house for ages past; have never been emancipated therefrom; and yet have hitherto yielded little profit to the same: And whereas we ourself have in the last war fought for and defended the said colonies, against the power of France, and thereby enabled them to make conquests from the said power in America, for which we have not yet received adequate compensation: And whereas it is just and expedient that a revenue should be raised from the said colonies in Britain, towards our indemnification; and that those who are descendants of our ancient subjects, and thence still owe us due obedience, should contribute to the replenishing of our royal coffers as they must have done, had their ancestors remained in the territories now to us appertaining: We do therefore hereby ordain and command, that, from and after the date of these presents, there shall be levied and paid to our officers of the *customs*, on all goods, wares, and merchandizes, and on all grain and other produce of the earth, exported from the said Island of Britain, and on all goods of whatever kind imported into the same, a duty of four and a half per cent *ad valorem*,<sup>40</sup> for the use of us and our successors. And that the said duty may more effectually be collected, we do hereby ordain, that all ships or vessels bound from Great Britain to any other part of the world, or from any other part of the world to Great Britain, shall in their respective voyages touch at our port of Königsberg,<sup>41</sup> there to be unladen, searched, and charged with the said duties.

"And whereas there hath been from time to time discovered in the said island of Great Britain, by our colonists there, many mines or beds of iron-stone; and sundry subjects, of our ancient dominion, skilful in converting the said stone into metal, have in time past transported themselves thither, carrying with them and communicating that art; and the inhabitants of the said island, presuming that they had a natural right to make the best use they could of the natural productions of their country for their own benefit, have not only built furnaces for smelting the said stone into iron, but have erected plating-forges, slitting-mills, and steel-furnaces, for the more convenient manufacturing of the same; thereby endangering a diminution of the said manufacture in our ancient dominion;—we do therefore hereby farther ordain, that, from and after the date hereof, no mill

<sup>38</sup> This *jeu d'esprit*, appearing first in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for October, 1773, is a fine illustration of Franklin's use of Swiftian hoax and irony. Franklin, as he explains in his letter to William Franklin (see pp. 143-44), has the pleasure of observing that it made "a fair hit" among the British reading public.  
<sup>39</sup> Early Germanic leaders who took part in the conquest of Britain.

<sup>40</sup> "According to value."

<sup>41</sup> That is, Königsberg, in East Prussia.

or other engine for slitting or rolling of iron, or any plating-forge to work with a tilt-hammer, or any furnace for making steel, shall be erected or continued in the said island of Great Britain: And the Lord Lieutenant of every county in the said island is hereby commanded, on information of any such erection within his county, to order and by force to cause the same to be abated and destroyed; as he shall answer the neglect thereof to us at his peril. But we are nevertheless graciously pleased to permit 10 the inhabitants of the said island to transport their iron into Prussia, there to be manufactured, and to them returned; they paying our Prussian subjects for the workmanship, with all the costs of commission, freight, and risk, coming and returning; any thing herein contained to the contrary notwithstanding.

"We do not, however, think fit to extend this our indulgence to the article of wool; but, meaning to encourage, not only the manufacturing of woollen cloth, but also the raising of wool, in our ancient 20 dominions, and to prevent both, as much as may be, in our said island, we do hereby absolutely forbid the transportation of wool from thence, even to the mother country, Prussia; and that those islanders may be farther and more effectually restrained in making any advantage of their own wool in the way of manufacture, we command that none shall be carried out of one county into another; nor shall any worsted, bay, or woollen yarn, cloth, says, bays, 30 kerseys, serges, frizes, druggets, cloth-serges, shalloons, or any other drapery stuffs, or woollen manufactures whatsoever, made up or mixed with wool in any of the said counties, be carried into any other county, or be water-borne even across the smallest river or creek, on penalty of forfeiture of the same, together with the boats, carriages, horses, &c., that shall be employed in removing them. Nevertheless, our loving subjects there are hereby permitted (if they think proper) to use all their wool as manure for the improvement of their lands.

"And whereas the art and mystery of making hats hath arrived at great perfection in Prussia, and the making of hats by our remoter subjects ought to be as much as possible restrained: And forasmuch as the islanders before mentioned, being in possession of wool, beaver and other furs, have presumptuously conceived they had a right to make some advantage thereof, by manufacturing the same into hats, to the prejudice of our domestic manufacture: We do there-

fore hereby strictly command and ordain, that no hats or felts whatsoever, dyed or undyed, finished or unfinished, shall be loaded or put into or upon any vessel, cart, carriage, or horse, to be transported or conveyed out of one county in the said island into another county, or to any other place whatsoever, by any person or persons whatsoever; on pain of forfeiting the same, with a penalty of five hundred pounds sterling for every offence. Nor shall any hat-maker, in any of the said counties, employ more than two apprentices, on penalty of five pounds sterling per month; we intending hereby, that such hat-makers, being so restrained, both in the production and sale of their commodity, may find no advantage in continuing their business. But, lest the said islanders should suffer inconveniency by the want of hats, we are farther graciously pleased to permit them to send their beaver furs to Prussia; and we also permit hats made thereof to be exported from Prussia to Britain; the people thus favoured to pay all costs and charges of manufacturing, interest, commission to our merchants, insurance and freight going and returning, as in the case of iron.

"And, lastly, being willing farther to favour our said colonies in Britain, we do hereby also ordain and command, that all the *thieves*, highway and street robbers, house-breakers, forgerers, murderers, s—d—tes, and villains of every denomination, who have forfeited their lives to the law in Prussia; but whom we, in our great clemency, do not think fit here to hang, shall be emptied out of our gaols into the said island of Great Britain, for the better peopling of that country.

"We flatter ourselves, that these our royal regulations and commands will be thought just and reasonable by our much-favoured colonists in England; the said regulations being copied from their statutes of 10 and 11 William III. c. 10, 5 Geo. II. c. 22, 23, Geo. II. c. 29, 4 Geo. I. c. 11, and from other 40 equitable laws made by their parliaments; or from instructions given by their Princes; or from resolutions of both Houses, entered into for the good government of their own colonies in *Ireland and America*.

"And all persons in the said island are hereby cautioned not to oppose in any wise the execution of this our Edict, or any part thereof, such opposition being high treason; of which all who are suspected shall be transported in fetters from Britain to Prussia,

there to be tried and executed according to the Prussian law.

"Such is our pleasure.

"Given at Potsdam, this twenty-fifth day of the month of August, one thousand seven hundred and seventy-three, and in the thirty-third year of our reign.

"By the King, in his Council.

"Rechtsmaessig,<sup>42</sup> Sec."

Some take this Edict to be merely one of the King's *Jeux d'Esprit*:<sup>43</sup> others suppose it serious, and that he means a quarrel with England; but all here think the assertion it concludes with, "that these regulations are copied from acts of the English parliament respecting their colonics," a very injurious one; it being impossible to believe, that a people distinguished for their love of liberty, a nation so wise, so liberal in its sentiments, so just and equitable towards its neighbours, should, from mean and injudicious views of petty immediate profit, treat its own children in a manner so arbitrary and tyrannical!

### *Rules by Which a Great Empire May Be Reduced to a Small One*<sup>44</sup>

PRESENTED TO A LATE MINISTER, WHEN HE ENTERED UPON HIS ADMINISTRATION

An ancient Sage boasted, that, tho' he could not fiddle, he knew how to make a *great city* of a *little one*. The science that I, a modern simpleton, am about to communicate, is the very reverse.

I address myself to all ministers who have the management of extensive dominions, which from their very greatness are become troublesome to govern, because the multiplicity of their affairs leaves no time for *fiddling*.

I. In the first place, gentlemen, you are to consider, that a great empire, like a great cake, is most easily diminished at the edges. Turn your attention, therefore, first to your *remotest* provinces; that, as you get rid of them, the next may follow in order.

II. That the possibility of this separation may always exist, take special care the provinces are never incorporated with the mother country; that they do not enjoy the same common rights, the same privileges in commerce; and that they are governed by

<sup>42</sup> German for "legal."

<sup>43</sup> Literally, play of mind; i.e., a sally giving play to cleverness or wit.

<sup>44</sup> Published in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, September, 1773.

*severer* laws, all of your *enacting*, without allowing them any share in the choice of the legislators. By carefully making and preserving such distinctions, you will (to keep to my simile of the cake) act like a wise ginger-bread-baker, who, to facilitate a division, cuts his dough half through in those places where, when baked, he would have it *broken to pieces*.

III. Those remote provinces have perhaps been acquired, purchased, or conquered, at the *sole expence* of the settlers, or their ancestors, without the aid of the mother country. If this should happen to increase her *strength*, by their growing numbers, ready to join in her wars; her *commerce*, by their growing demand for her manufactures; or her *naval power*, by greater employment for her ships and seamen, they may probably suppose some merit in this, and that it entitles them to some favour; you are therefore to *forget it all, or resent it*, as if they had done you injury. If they happen to be zealous whigs, friends of liberty, nurtured in revolution<sup>45</sup> principles, *remember all that* to their prejudice, and resolve to punish it; for such principles, after a revolution is thoroughly established, are of *no more use*; they are even *odious* and *abominable*.

IV. However peaceably your colonies have submitted to your government, shewn their affection to your interests, and patiently borne their grievances; you are to *suppose* them always inclined to revolt, and treat them accordingly. Quarter troops among them, who by their insolence may *provoke* the rising of mobs, and by their bullets and bayonets *suppress* them. By this means, like the husband who uses his wife ill *from suspicion*, you may in time convert your *suspensions* into *realities*.

V. Remote provinces must have *Governors* and *Judges*, to represent the Royal Person, and execute everywhere the delegated parts of his office and authority. You ministers know, that much of the strength of government depends on the *opinion* of the people; and much of that opinion on the *choice of rulers* placed immediately over them. If you send them wise and good men for governors, who study the interest of the colonists, and advance their prosperity, they will think their King wise and good, and that he wishes the welfare of his subjects. If you send them learned and upright men for Judges, they will think him a lover of justice. This may attach

<sup>45</sup> A reference to the Whig leadership in the Glorious Revolution of 1688.

your provinces more to his government. You are therefore to be careful whom you recommend for those offices. If you can find prodigals, who have ruined their fortunes, broken gamesters or stock-jobbers, these may do well as *governors*; for they will probably be rapacious, and provoke the people by their extortions. Wrangling proctors and pettifogging lawyers, too, are not amiss; for they will be for ever disputing and quarrelling with their little parliaments. If withal they should be ignorant, wrong-headed, and insolent, so much the better. Attornies' clerks and Newgate solicitors <sup>46</sup> will do for *Chief Justices*, especially if they hold their places *during your pleasure*; and all will contribute to impress those ideas of your government, that are proper for a people you would wish to renounce it.

VI. To confirm these impressions, and strike them deeper, whenever the injured come to the capital with complaints of maladministration, oppression, or injustice, punish such suitors with long delay, enormous expence, and a final judgment in favour of the oppressor. This will have an admirable effect every way. The trouble of future complaints will be prevented, and Governors and Judges will be encouraged to farther acts of oppression and injustice; and thence the people may become more disaffected, and at length desperate.

VII. When such Governors have crammed their coffers, and made themselves so odious to the people that they can no longer remain among them, with safety to their persons, *recall and reward* them with pensions. You may make them *baronets* <sup>47</sup> too, if that respectable order should not think fit to resent it. All will contribute to encourage new governors in the same practice, and make the supreme government, *detestable*.

VIII. If, when you are engaged in war, your colonies should vie in liberal aids of men and money against the common enemy, upon your simple requisition, and give far beyond their abilities, reflect that <sup>48</sup> a penny taken from them by your power is more honourable to you, than a pound presented by their benevolence; despise therefore their voluntary grants, and resolve to harass them with novel taxes. They will probably complain to your parliaments, that they are taxed by a body in which they have no repre-

sentative, and that this is contrary to common right. They will petition for redress. Let the Parliaments flout their claims, reject their petitions, refuse even to suffer the reading of them, and treat the petitioners with the utmost contempt. Nothing can have a better effect in producing the alienation proposed; for though many can forgive injuries, *none ever forgave contempt*.

IX. In laying these taxes, never regard the heavy burthens those remote people already undergo, in defending their own frontiers, supporting their own provincial governments, making new roads, building bridges, churches, and other public edifices, which in old countries have been done to your hands by your ancestors, but which occasion constant calls and demands on the purses of a new people. Forget the *restraints* you lay on their trade for *your own* benefit, and the advantage a *monopoly* of this trade gives your exacting merchants. Think nothing of the wealth those merchants and your manufacturers acquire by the colony commerce; their increased ability thereby to pay taxes at home; their accumulating, in the price of their commodities, most of those taxes, and so levying them from their consuming customers; all this, and the employment and support of thousands of your poor by the colonists, you are *intirely to forget*. But remember to make your arbitrary tax more grievous to your provinces, by public declarations importing that your power of taxing them has *no limits*; so that when you take from them without their consent one shilling in the pound, you have a clear right to the other nineteen. This will probably weaken every idea of *security in their property*, and convince them, that under such a government they *have nothing they can call their own*; which can scarce fail of producing the *happiest consequences*!

X. Possibly, indeed, some of them might still comfort themselves, and say, "Though we have no property, we have yet *something* left that is valuable; we have constitutional *liberty*, both of person and of conscience. This King, these Lords, and these Commons, who it seems are too remote from us to know us, and feel for us, cannot take from us our *Habeas Corpus* <sup>48</sup> right, or our right of trial *by a jury of our neighbours*; they cannot deprive us of the exercise of our religion, alter our ecclesiastical constitution, and compel us to be Papists, if they please,

<sup>48</sup> Any of several common-law writs having for their object to bring the accused before a court or judge.

<sup>46</sup> Shyster lawyers; of low rank.

<sup>47</sup> Governor Francis Bernard (1714-1779), by whose recommendation British troops had been quartered in Boston, was made a baronet upon his recall from Massachusetts.



or Mahometans." To annihilate this comfort, begin by laws to perplex their commerce with infinite regulations, impossible to be remembered and observed; ordain seizures of their property for every failure; take away the trial of such property by Jury, and give it to arbitrary Judges of your own appointing, and of the lowest characters in the country, whose salaries and emoluments are to arise out of the duties or condemnations, and whose appointments are *during pleasure*. Then let there be a formal declaration of 10 both Houses, that opposition to your edicts is *treason*, and that any person suspected of treason in the provinces may, according to some obsolete law, be seized and sent to the metropolis of the empire for trial; and pass an act, that those there charged with certain other offences, shall be sent away in chains from their friends and country to be tried in the same manner for felony. Then erect a new Court of Inquisition among them, accompanied by an armed force, with instructions to transport all such suspected persons; 20 to be ruined by the expence, if they bring over evidences to prove their innocence, or be found guilty and hanged, if they cannot afford it. And, lest the people should think you cannot possibly go any farther, pass another solemn declaratory act,<sup>49</sup> "that King, Lords, Commons had, hath, and of right ought to have, full power and authority to make statutes of sufficient force and validity to bind the unrepresented provinces IN ALL CASES WHATSOEVER." This will include *spiritual* with temporal, and, taken together, 30 must operate wonderfully to your purpose; by convincing them, that they are at present under a power something like that spoken of in the scriptures, which can not only *kill their bodies*, but *damn their souls* to all eternity, by compelling them, if it pleases, to *worship the Devil*.

XI. To make your taxes more odious, and more likely to procure resistance, send from the capital a board of officers to superintend the collection, composed of the most *indiscreet, ill-bred, and insolent* 40 you can find. Let these have large salaries out of the extorted revenue, and live in open, grating luxury upon the sweat and blood of the industrious; whom they are to worry continually with groundless and expensive prosecution before the abovementioned arbitrary revenue Judges; *all at the cost of the party prosecuted*, tho' acquitted, because *the King is to pay*

*no costs*. Let these men, *by your order*, be exempted from all the common taxes and burthens of the province, though they and their property are protected by its laws. If any revenue officers are *suspected* of the least tenderness for the people, discard them. If others are justly complained of, protect and reward them. If any of the under officers behave so as to provoke the people to drub them, promote those to better offices: this will encourage others to procure for themselves such profitable drubbings, by multiplying and enlarging such provocations, and *all will work towards the end you aim at*.

XII. Another way to make your tax odious, is to misapply the produce of it. If it was originally appropriated for the *defence* of the provinces, the better support of government, and the administration of justice, where it may be *necessary*, then apply none of it to that *defence*, but bestow it where it is *not necessary*, in augmented salaries or pensions to every governor, who has distinguished himself by his enmity to the people, and by calumniating them to their sovereign. This will make them pay it more unwillingly, and be more apt to quarrel with those that collect it and those that imposed it, who will quarrel again with them, and all shall contribute to your *main purpose*, of making them *weary of your government*.

XIII. If the people of any province have been accustomed to support their own Governors and Judges to satisfaction, you are to apprehend that such Governors and Judges may be thereby influenced to treat the people kindly, and to do them justice. This is another reason for applying part of that revenue in larger salaries to such Governors and Judges, given, as their commissions are, *during your pleasure* only; forbidding them to take any salaries from their provinces; that thus the people may no longer hope any kindness from their Governors, or (in Crown cases)<sup>50</sup> any justice from their Judges. And, as the money thus misapplied in one province is extorted from all, probably *all will resent the misapplication*.

XIV. If the parliaments of your provinces should dare to claim rights, or complain of your administration, order them to be harrassed with *repeated dissolutions*. If the same men are continually returned by new elections, adjourn their meetings to some country village, where they cannot be accommodated, and

<sup>49</sup> The Declaratory Act of 1766 was passed immediately after the Stamp Act was repealed.

<sup>50</sup> Equity cases in law, which formerly were appealed directly to the king.



there keep them *during pleasure*; for this, you know, is your *PREROGATIVE*; and an excellent one it is, as you may manage it to promote discontents among the people, diminish their respect, and *increase their disaffection*.

XV. Convert the brave, honest officers of your navy into pimping tide-waiters and colony officers of the *customs*. Let those, who in time of war fought gallantly in defence of the commerce of their countrymen, in peace be taught to prey upon it. Let them learn to be corrupted by great and real smugglers; but (to shew their diligence) scour with armed boats every bay, harbour, river, creek, cove, or nook throughout the coast of your colonies; stop and detain every coaster, every wood-boat, every fisherman, tumble their cargoes and even their ballast inside out and upside down; and, if a penn'orth of pins is found unentered, let the whole be seized and confiscated. Thus shall the trade of your colonists suffer more from their friends in time of peace, than it did from their enemies in war. Then let these boat crews land upon every farm in their way, rob the orchards, steal the pigs and the poultry, and insult the inhabitants. If the injured and exasperated farmers, unable to procure other justice, should attack the aggressors, drub them, and burn their boats;<sup>51</sup> you are to call this *high treason and rebellion*, order fleets and armies into their country, and threaten to carry all the offenders three thousand miles to be hanged, drawn, and quartered. *O! this will work admirably!*<sup>30</sup>

XVI. If you are told of discontents in your colonies, never believe that they are general, or that you have given occasion for them; therefore do not think of applying any remedy, or of changing any offensive measure. Redress no grievance, lest they should be encouraged to demand the redress of some other grievance. Grant no request that is just and reasonable, lest they should make another that is unreasonable. Take all your informations of the state of the colonies from your Governors and officers in enmity<sup>40</sup> with them. Encourage and reward these *leasing-makers*; secrete their lying accusations, lest they should be confuted; but act upon them as the clearest evidence; and believe nothing you hear from the friends of the people: suppose all *their* complaints to be invented and promoted by a few factious demagogues, whom if you could catch and hang, all would

<sup>51</sup> A reference to the burning of the schooner *Gaspée*, June 10, 1772, which called forth the threats mentioned.

be quiet. Catch and hang a few of them accordingly; and the *blood of the Martyrs* shall *work miracles* in favour of your purpose.

XVII. If you see *rival nations* rejoicing at the prospect of your disunion with your provinces, and endeavouring to promote it; if they translate, publish, and applaud all the complaints of your discontented colonists, at the same time privately stimulating you to severer measures, let not that *alarm* or offend you. Why should it, since you all mean *the same thing*?

XVIII. If any colony should at their own charge erect a fortress<sup>52</sup> to secure their port against the fleets of a foreign enemy, get your Governor to betray that fortress into your hands. Never think of paying what it cost the country, for that would look, at least, like some regard for justice; but turn it into a citadel to awe the inhabitants and curb their commerce. If they should have lodged in such fortress the very arms they bought and used to aid you in your conquests, seize them all; it will provoke like *ingratitude* added to *robbery*. One admirable effect of these operations will be, to discourage every other colony from erecting such defences, and so your enemies may more easily invade them; to the great disgrace of your government, and of course *the furtherance of your project*.

XIX. Send armies into their country under pretence of protecting the inhabitants; but, instead of garrisoning the forts on their frontiers with those troops, to prevent incursions, demolish those forts, and order the troops into the heart of the country, that the savages may be encouraged to attack the frontiers, and that the troops may be protected by the inhabitants. This will seem to proceed from your ill will or your ignorance, and contribute farther to produce and strengthen an opinion among them, *that you are no longer fit to govern them*.

XX. Lastly, invest the General of your army in the provinces, with great and unconstitutional powers, and free him from the controul of even your own Civil Governors. Let him have troops now under his command, with all the fortresses in his possession; and who knows but (like some provincial Generals in the Roman empire, and encouraged by the universal discontent you have produced) he may take

<sup>52</sup> Castle William in the harbor of Boston, delivered to the British by order of Governor Thomas Hutchinson (1711-1780), in September, 1770.

it into his head to set up for himself? If he should, and you have carefully practised these few *excellent rules* of mine, take my word for it, all the provinces will immediately join him; and you will that day (if you have not done it sooner) get rid of the trouble of governing them, and all the *plagues* attending their *commerce* and connection from henceforth and for ever.

Q. E. D.<sup>53</sup>

### To William Franklin

London, October 6, 1773.

Dear Son,

I wrote to you the 1st of last month, since which I have received yours of July 29, from New York. I know not what letters of mine Governor H[utchinson] could mean, as advising the people to insist on their independency. But whatever they were, I suppose he has sent copies of them hither, having heard 20 some whisperings about them. I shall however, be able at any time to justify every thing I have written; the purport being uniformly this, that they should carefully avoid all tumults and every violent measure, and content themselves with verbally keeping up their claims, and holding forth their rights whenever occasion requires; secure, that, from the growing importance of America, those claims will ere long be attended to and acknowledged.

From a long and thorough consideration of the 30 subject, I am indeed of opinion, that the parliament has no right to make any law whatever, binding on the colonies; that the king, and not the king, lords, and commons collectively, is their sovereign; and that the king, with their respective parliaments, is their only legislator. I know your sentiments differ from mine on these subjects. You are a thorough government man, which I do not wonder at, nor do I aim at converting you. I only wish you to act uprightly and steadily, avoiding that duplicity, which in Hutch- 40 inson, adds contempt to indignation. If you can promote the prosperity of your people, and leave them happier than you found them, whatever your political principles are, your memory will be honoured.

I have written two pieces here lately for the *Public Advertiser*, on American affairs, designed to expose the conduct of this country towards the colonies in a

short, comprehensive, and striking view, and stated, therefore, in out-of-the-way forms, as most likely to take the general attention. The first was called "*Rules by which a Great Empire may be reduced to a small one*;" the second, "*An Edict of the King of Prussia*." I sent you one of the first, but could not get enough of the second to spare you one, though my clerk went the next morning to the printer's, and wherever they were sold. They were all gone but two. In my 10 own mind I preferred the first, as a composition for the quantity and variety of the matter contained, and a kind of spirited ending of each paragraph. But I find that others here generally prefer the second.

I am not suspected as the author, except by one or two friends; and have heard the latter spoken of in the highest terms, as the keenest and severest piece that has appeared here for a long time. Lord Mansfield, I hear, said of it, that it was *very ABLE and very ARTFUL indeed*; and would do mischief by giving here a bad impression of the measures of government; and in the colonies, by encouraging them in their contumacy. It is reprinted in the *Chronicle*, where you will see it, but stripped of all the capitalizing and italicizing, that intimate the allusions and mark the emphasis of written discourses, to bring them as near as possible to those spoken: printing such a piece all in one even small character, seems to be like repeating one of Whitefield's sermons in the monotony of a schoolboy.

What made it the more noticed here was, that people in reading it were, as the phrase is, *taken in*, till they had got half through it, and imagined it a real edict, to which mistake I suppose the King of Prussia's *character* must have contributed. I was down at Lord Le Despencer's when the post brought that day's papers. Mr. Whitehead was there, too, (Paul Whitehead, the author of "*Manners*,") who runs early through all the papers, and tells the company what he finds remarkable. He had them in another room, and we were chatting in the breakfast parlour, when he came running in to us, out of breath, with the paper in his hand. Here! says he, here's news for ye! *Here's the King of Prussia, claiming a right to this kingdom!* All stared, and I as much as anybody; and he went on to read it. When he had read two or three paragraphs, a gentleman present said, *Damn his impudence, I dare say, we shall hear by next post that he is upon his march with one hundred thousand men to back this.* Whitehead, who is very

<sup>53</sup> *Quod Erat Demonstrandum*, "which was to be demonstrated." The usual conclusion to a problem in geometry.

shrewd, soon after began to smoke it, and looking in my face said, *I'll be hanged if this is not some of your American jokes upon us.* The reading went on, and ended with abundance of laughing, and a general verdict that it was a fair hit: and the piece was cut out of the paper and preserved in my Lord's collection.

I do not wonder that Hutchinson should be dejected. It must be an uncomfortable thing to live among people who he is conscious universally detest <sup>10</sup> him. Yet I fancy he will not have leave to come home, both because they know not well what to do with him, and because they do not very well like his conduct. I am ever your affectionate father,

B. Franklin.

### *To William Strahan* <sup>54</sup>

Philad<sup>a</sup> July 5, 1775.

Mr. Strahan,

You are a Member of Parliament, and one of that Majority which has doomed my Country to Destruction.—You have begun to burn our Towns, and murder our People.—Look upon your Hands! They are stained with the Blood of your Relations!—You and I were long Friends:—You are now my Enemy,—and **I am**

Yours,

B. Franklin.

### *To Joseph Priestley* <sup>55</sup>

Philadelphia, 3 October, 1775.

Dear Sir:—I am set out to-morrow for the camp, and, having just heard of this opportunity, can only write a line to say that I am well and hearty. Tell our dear good friend [Dr. Price],<sup>56</sup> who sometimes has his doubts and despondencies about our firmness, that America is determined and unanimous; a very few Tories and placement excepted, who will prob-<sup>40</sup> ably soon export themselves. Britain, at the expense of three millions, has killed one hundred and fifty Yankees this campaign, which is twenty thousand

<sup>54</sup> Franklin's writing but never sending this letter illustrates his prudence even in matters that aroused his strongest feelings.

<sup>55</sup> Priestley (1733–1804), famous English clergyman, chemist, physicist, and intimate friend of Franklin's, was a skillful propagandist for the American cause.

<sup>56</sup> Dr. Richard Price (1723–1791), like Priestley, was a clever pamphleteer and one of the intellectual radicals in England who espoused revolutionary doctrines.

pounds a head; and at Bunker's Hill she gained a mile of ground, half of which she lost again by our taking post on Ploughed Hill. During the same time sixty thousand children have been born in America. From these *data* his mathematical head will easily calculate the time and expense necessary to kill us all, and conquer our whole territory. My sincere respects to —, and to the club of honest Whigs at —. Adieu. I am ever your most affectionately,

B. Franklin.

### *To a Friend in England* <sup>57</sup>

Philadelphia, Oct. 3, 1775.

Dear Sir,

I wish as ardently as you can do for peace, and should rejoice exceedingly in cooperating with you to that end. But every ship from Britain brings some intelligence of new measures that tend more and more <sup>20</sup> to exasperate; and it seems to be, that until you have found by dear experience the reducing us by force impracticable, you will think of nothing fair and reasonable.

We have as yet resolved only on defensive measures. If you would recall your forces and stay at home, we should meditate nothing to injure you. A little time so given for cooling on both sides would have excellent effects. But you will goad and provoke us. You despise us too much; and you are insensible of <sup>30</sup> the Italian adage, that there is no *little enemy*. I am persuaded that the body of the British people are our friends; but they are changable, and by your lying gazettes may soon be made our enemies. Our respect for them will proportionably diminish, and I see clearly we are on the high road to mutual Enmity[,] hatred and detestation. A separation of course will be inevitable. 'Tis a million of pities so fair a plan as we have hitherto been engaged in, for increasing strength and empire with *public felicity*, should be destroyed by the mangling hands of a few blundering ministers. It will not be destroyed; God will protect and prosper it, you will only exclude yourselves from any share in it. We hear, that more ships and troops are coming out. We know, that you may do us a great deal of mischief, and are determined to bear it patiently as

<sup>57</sup> It is generally held that this friend was David Hartley (1732–1813), son of the English physicist and philosopher by the same name. Franklin had met the younger Hartley about 1759. He opposed the war with the colonies. He and Franklin drew up the Peace Treaty of 1783.

long as we can. But, if you flatter yourselves with beating us into submission, you know neither the people nor the country. The Congress are still sitting, and will wait the result of their *last* petition. Yours, &c.

B. Franklin.

*The Sale of the Hessians*<sup>58</sup>

*From the Count de Schaumbergh to the Baron  
Hohendorf, Commanding the Hessian  
Troops in America*

Rome, February 18, 1777.

Monsieur Le Baron:—

On my return from Naples, I received at Rome your letter of the 27th December of last year. I have learned with unspeakable pleasure the courage our troops exhibited at Trenton, and you cannot imagine my joy on being told that of the 1,950 Hessians engaged in the fight, but 345 escaped. There were just 1,605 men killed, and I cannot sufficiently commend your prudence in sending an exact list of the dead to my minister in London. This precaution was the more necessary, as the report sent to the English ministry does not give but 1,455 dead. This would make 483,450 florins instead of 643,500 which I am entitled to demand under our convention. You will comprehend the prejudice which such an error would work in my finances; and I do not doubt you will take the necessary pains to prove that Lord North's list is false and yours correct.

The court of London objects that there were a hundred wounded who ought not to be included in the list, nor paid for as dead; but I trust you will not overlook my instructions to you on quitting Cassel, and that you will not have tried by human succor to recall the life of the unfortunates whose days could not be lengthened but by the loss of a leg or an arm. That would be making them a pernicious present, and I am sure they would rather die than live in a condition no longer fit for my service. I do not mean by this that you should assassinate them; we should be humane, my dear Baron, but you may insinuate to the surgeons with entire propriety that a crippled man is a reproach to their profession, and that there

is no wiser course than to let every one of them die when he ceases to be fit to fight.

I am about to send to you some new recruits. Don't economize them. Remember glory before all things. Glory is true wealth. There is nothing degrades the soldier like the love of money. He must care only for honour and reputation, but this reputation must be acquired in the midst of dangers. A battle gained without costing the conqueror any blood is an inglorious success, while the conquered cover themselves with glory by perishing with their arms in their hands. Do you remember that of the 300 Lacedæmonians who defended the defile of Thermopylæ, not one returned? How happy should I be could I say the same of my brave Hessians!

It is true that their king, Leonidas, perished with them: but things have changed, and it is no longer the custom for princes of the empire to go and fight in America for a cause with which they have no concern. And besides, to whom should they pay the thirty guineas per man if I did not stay in Europe to receive them? Then, it is necessary also that I be ready to send recruits to replace the men you lose. For this purpose I must return to Hesse. It is true, grown men are becoming scarce there, but I will send you boys. Besides, the scarcer the commodity the higher the price. I am assured that the women and little girls have begun to till our lands, and they get on not badly. You did right to send back to Europe that Dr. Crumerus who was so successful in curing dysentery. Don't bother with a man who is subject to looseness of the bowels. That disease makes bad soldiers. One coward will do more mischief in an engagement than ten brave men will do good. Better that they burst in their barracks than fly in a battle, and tarnish the glory of our arms. Besides, you know that they pay me as killed for all who die from disease, and I don't get a farthing for runaways. My trip to Italy, which has cost me enormously, makes it desirable that there should be a great mortality among them. You will therefore promise promotion to all who expose themselves; you will exhort them to seek glory in the midst of dangers; you will say to Major Maundorff that I am not at all content with his saving the 345 men who escaped the massacre of Trenton. Through the whole campaign he has not had ten men killed in consequence of his orders. Finally, let it be your principal object to prolong the war and avoid a decisive engagement on either side, for I have made

<sup>58</sup> Time and place of first publication unknown. A little masterpiece of irony, this letter made a hit no less in England than in the colonies.

arrangements for a grand Italian opera, and I do not wish to be obliged to give it up. Meantime I pray God, my dear Baron de Hohendorf, to have you in his holy and gracious keeping.

### *Model of a Letter of Recommendation*<sup>59</sup>

Paris, April 2, 1777.

Sir:—

The bearer of this, who is going to America, presses 10 me to give him a Letter of Recommendation, tho' I know nothing of him, not even his Name. This may seem extraordinary, but I assure you it is not uncommon here. Sometimes, indeed one unknown Person brings another equally unknown, to recommend him; and sometimes they recommend one another! As to this Gentleman, I must refer you to himself for his Character and Merits, with which he is certainly better acquainted than I can possibly be. I recom- 20 mend him however to those Civilitics, which every Stranger, of whom one knows no Harm, has a Right to; and I request you will do him all the good Offices, and show him all the Favour that, on further Acquaintance, you shall find him to deserve. I have the Honour to be, etc.

[B. F.]

### *The Ephemera*<sup>60</sup>

AN EMBLEM OF HUMAN LIFE

You may remember, my dear friend, that when we lately spent that happy day in the delightful garden and sweet society of the Moulin Joly, I stopt a little in one of our walks, and staid some time behind the company. We had been shown numberless skeletons of a kind of little fly, called an ephemera, whose successive generations, we were told, were bred and expired within the day. I happened to see a living com- 40 pany of them on a leaf, who appeared to be engaged in conversation. You know I understand all the inferior animal tongues: my too great application to the study of them is the best excuse I can give for

<sup>59</sup> Franklin repeatedly complained, especially during his years in Europe, when many planning to emigrate to America sought his help, of the "perpetual torment" which these applicants provided for him.

<sup>60</sup> Written in 1778. The scene is laid on Moulin Joly, the country-seat of Claude-Henri Watelet, forming a little island in the Seine, where Franklin enjoyed the company of a number of distinguished French men and women, among them Madame Brillou de Jouy, the "ever amicable *Brillante*" referred to at the end of the essay.

the little progress I have made in your charming language. I listened through curiosity to the discourse of these little creatures; but as they, in their national vivacity, spoke three or four together, I could make but little of their conversation. I found, however, by some broken expressions that I heard now and then, they were disputing warmly on the merit of two foreign musicians, one a *cousin*,<sup>61</sup> the other a *moscheto*;<sup>62</sup> in which dispute they spent their time, seemingly as regardless of the shortness of life as if they had been sure of living a month. Happy people! thought I, you live certainly under a wise, just, and mild government, since you have no public grievances to complain of, nor any subject of contention but the perfections and imperfections of foreign music. I turned my head from them to an old grey-headed one, who was single on another leaf, and talking to himself. Being amused with his soliloquy, I put it down in writing, in hopes it will likewise amuse her to whom I am so much indebted for the most pleasing of all amusements, her delicious company and heavenly harmony.

"It was," said he, "the opinion of learned philosophers of our race, who lived and flourished long before my time, that this vast world, the Moulin Joly, could not itself subsist more than eighteen hours; and I think there was some foundation for that opinion, since, by the apparent motion of the great luminary that gives life to all nature, and which in my time 30 has evidently declined considerably towards the ocean at the end of our earth, it must then finish its course, be extinguished in the waters that surround us, and leave the world in cold and darkness, necessarily producing universal death and destruction. I have lived seven of those hours, a great age, being no less than four hundred and twenty minutes of time. How very few of us continue so long! I have seen generations born, flourish, and expire. My present friends are the children and grandchildren of the friends of my youth, who are now, alas, no more! And I must soon follow them; for, by the course of nature, though still in health, I cannot expect to live above seven or eight minutes longer. What now avails all my toil and labor, in amassing honey-dew on this leaf, which I cannot live to enjoy! What the political struggles I have been engaged in, for the good of my compatriot inhabitants of this bush, or my philosophical

<sup>61</sup> Gnat.

<sup>62</sup> Mosquito.

studies for the benefit if our race in general! for, in politics, what can laws do without morals? Our present race of ephemera will in a course of minutes become corrupt, like those of other and older bushes, and consequently as wretched. And in philosophy how small our progress! Alas! art is long, and life is short. My friends would comfort me with the idea of a name, they say, I shall leave behind me; and they tell me I have lived long enough to nature and to glory. But what will fame be to an ephemera who no longer exists? And what will become of all history in the eighteenth hour, when the world itself, even the whole Moulin Joly, shall come to its end, and be buried in universal ruin?"

To me, after all my eager pursuits, no solid pleasures now remain, but the reflection of a long life spent in meaning well, the sensible conversation of a few good lady ephemera, and now and then a kind smile and a tune from the ever amiable *Brillante*.<sup>63</sup>

B. Franklin. 20 much for my folly, that I cried with vexation; and the reflection gave me more chagrin than the *whistle* gave me pleasure.

### *The Whistle*<sup>64</sup>

*To Madame Brillon*

Passy, November 10, 1779.

I received my dear friend's two letters, one for Wednesday and one for Saturday. This is again Wednesday. I do not deserve one for to-day, because I have not answered the former. But, indolent as I am, and averse to writing, the fear of having no more of your pleasing epistles, if I do not contribute to the correspondence, obliges me to take up my pen; and as Mr. B. has kindly sent me word, that he sets out to-morrow to see you, instead of spending this Wednesday evening as I have done its namesakes, in your delightful company, I sit down to spend it in thinking of you, in writing to you, and in reading over and over again your letters.

I am charmed with your description of Paradise, 40 and with your plan of living there; and I approve much of your conclusion, that, in the mean time, we should draw all the good we can from this world. In my opinion, we might all draw more good from it

than we do, and suffer less evil, if we would take care not to give too much for *whistles*. For to me it seems, that most of the unhappy people we meet with, are become so by neglect of that caution.

You ask what I mean? You love stories, and will excuse my telling one of myself.

When I was a child of seven years old, my friends, on a holiday, filled my pocket with coppers. I went directly to a shop where they sold toys for children; and, being charmed with the sound of a *whistle*, that I met by the way in the hands of another boy, I voluntarily offered and gave all my money for one. I then came home, and went whistling all over the house, much pleased with my *whistle*, but disturbing all the family. My brothers, and sisters, and cousins, understanding the bargain I had made, told me I had given four times as much for it as it was worth; put me in mind what good things I might have bought with the rest of the money; and laughed at me so

much for my folly, that I cried with vexation; and the reflection gave me more chagrin than the *whistle* gave me pleasure.

This however was afterwards of use to me, the impression continuing on my mind; so that often, when I was tempted to buy some unnecessary thing, I said to myself, *Don't give too much for the whistle*; and I saved my money.

As I grew up, came into the world, and observed the actions of men, I thought I met with many, very many, who *gave too much for the whistle*.

When I saw one too ambitious of court favour, sacrificing his time in attendance on levees, his repose, his liberty, his virtue, and perhaps his friends, to attain it, I have said to myself, *This man gives too much for his whistle*.

When I saw another fond of popularity, constantly employing himself in political bustles, neglecting his own affairs, and ruining them by that neglect, *He pays, indeed*, said I, *too much for his whistle*.

If I knew a miser, who gave up every kind of comfortable living, all the pleasure of doing good to others, all the esteem of his fellow-citizens, and the joys of benevolent friendship, for the sake of accumulating wealth, *Poor man*, said I, *you pay too much for your whistle*.

When I met with a man of pleasure, sacrificing every laudable improvement of the mind, or of his fortune, to mere corporeal sensations, and ruining his health in their pursuit, *Mistaken man*, said I, *you*

<sup>63</sup> A Franklinian play on words: Madame Brillon = *Brillante*.

<sup>64</sup> "The Whistle," like "The Ephemera," is an example of the bagatelles (French, from the Italian *Bagata*, meaning a trifle), in which Franklin sought to imitate the accomplished grace and easy manner for which, as he observed, "the French are so remarkable."

*are providing pain for yourself, instead of pleasure; you give too much for your whistle.*

If I see one fond of appearance, or fine clothes, fine houses, fine furniture, fine equipages, all above his fortune, for which he contracts debts, and ends his career in a prison, *Alas! say I, he has paid dear, very dear, for his whistle.*

When I see a beautiful, sweet-tempered girl married to an ill-natured brute of a husband, *What a pity, say I, that she should pay so much for a whistle!*

In short, I conceive that great part of the miseries of mankind are brought upon them by the false estimates they have made of the value of things, and by their *giving too much for their whistles.*

Yet I ought to have charity for these unhappy people, when I consider, that, with all this wisdom of which I am boasting, there are certain things in the world so tempting, for example, the apples of King John, which happily are not to be bought; for if they were put to sale by auction, I might very easily be led to ruin myself in the purchase, and find that I had once more given too much for the *whistle.*

Adieu, my dear friend, and believe me ever yours very sincerely and with unalterable affection,

B. Franklin.

### *An Economical Project*

*To the Authors of the Journal of Paris*

[March 20, 1784?] 30

Messieurs,

You often entertain us with accounts of new discoveries. Permit me to communicate to the public, through your paper, one that has lately been made by myself, and which I conceive may be of great utility.

I was the other evening in a grand company, where the new lamp of Messrs. Quinquet and Lange was introduced, and much admired for its splendour; but a general inquiry was made, whether the oil it consumed was not in proportion to the light it afforded, in which case there would be no saving in the use of it. No one present could satisfy us in that point, which all agreed ought to be known, it being a very desirable thing to lessen, if possible, the expense of lighting our apartments, when every other article of family expense was so much augmented.

I was pleased to see this general concern for economy, for I love economy exceedingly.

I went home, and to bed, three or four hours after midnight, with my head full of the subject. An accidental sudden noise waked me about six in the morning, when I was surprised to find my room filled with light; and I imagined at first, that a number of those lamps had been brought into it; but, rubbing my eyes, I perceived the light came in at the windows. I got up and looked out to see what might be the occasion of it, when I saw the sun just rising above the horizon, from whence he poured his rays plentifully into my chamber, my domestic having negligently omitted, the preceding evening, to close the shutters.

I looked at my watch, which goes very well, and found that it was but six o'clock; and still thinking it something extraordinary that the sun should rise so early, I looked into the almanac, where I found it to be the hour given for his rising on that day. I looked forward, too, and found he was to rise still earlier every day till towards the end of June; and that at no time in the year he retarded his rising so long as till eight o'clock. Your readers, who with me have never seen any signs of sunshine before noon, and seldom regard the astronomical part of the almanac, will be as much astonished as I was, when they hear of his rising so early; and especially when I assure them, *that he gives light as soon as he rises.* I am convinced of this. I am certain of my fact. One cannot be more certain of any fact. I saw it with my own eyes. And, having repeated this observation the three following mornings, I found always precisely the same result.

Yet it so happens, that when I speak of this discovery to others, I can easily perceive by their countenances, though they forbear expressing it in words, that they do not quite believe me. One, indeed, who is a learned natural philosopher, has assured me that I must certainly be mistaken as to the circumstance of the light coming into my room; for it being well known, as he says, that there could be no light abroad at that hour, it follows that none could enter from without; and that of consequence, my windows being accidentally left open, instead of letting in the light, had only served to let out the darkness; and he used many ingenious arguments to show me how I might, by that means, have been deceived. I owned that he puzzled me a little, but he did not satisfy me; and the subsequent observations I made, as above mentioned, confirmed me in my first opinion.

This event has given rise in my mind to several serious and important reflections. I considered that, if I had not been awakened so early in the morning, I should have slept six hours longer by the light of the sun, and in exchange have lived six hours the following night by candle-light; and, the latter being a much more expensive light than the former, my love of economy induced me to muster up what little arithmetic I was master of, and to make some calculations, which I shall give you, after observing <sup>10</sup> that utility is, in my opinion the test of value in matters of invention, and that a discovery which can be applied to no use, or is not good for something, is good for nothing.

I took for the basis of my calculation the supposition that there are one hundred thousand families in Paris, and that these families consume in the night half a pound of bougies, or candles, per hour. I think this is a moderate allowance, taking one family with another; for though I believe some consume less, I <sup>20</sup> know that many consume a great deal more. Then estimating seven hours per day as a medium quantity between the time of the sun's rising and ours, he rising during the six following months from six to eight hours before noon, and there being seven hours of course per night in which we burn candles, the account will stand thus;—

In the six months between the 20th of March and the 20th of September, there are

Nights .....	183
Hours of each night in which we burn candles .....	7
Multiplication gives for the total number of hours .....	1,281
These 1,281 hours multiplied by 100,000, the number of inhabitants, give.....	128,100,000
One hundred twenty-eight millions and one hundred thousand hours, spent at Paris by candle-light, which, at half a pound of wax and tallow per hour, gives the weight of .....	64,050,000
Sixty-four millions and fifty thousand of pounds, which, estimating the whole at the medium price of thirty sols the pound, makes the sum of ninety-six millions and seventy-five thousand livres tournois.....	96,075,000

An immense sum! that the city of Paris might save every year, by the economy of using sunshine instead of candles.

If it should be said, that people are apt to be obstinately attached to old customs, and that it will be difficult to induce them to rise before noon, consequently my discovery can be of little use: I answer, *Nil desperandum*.<sup>65</sup> I believe all who have common sense, as soon as they have learnt from this paper that it is daylight when the sun rises, will contrive to rise with him; and, to compel the rest, I would propose the following regulations;

First. Let a tax be laid of a louis per window, on every window that is provided with shutters to keep out the light of the sun.

Second. Let the same salutary operation of police be made use of, to prevent our burning candles, that inclined us last winter to be more economical in burning wood; that is, let guards be placed in the shops of the wax and tallow chandlers, and no family be permitted to be supplied with more than one pound of candles per week.

Third. Let guards also be posted to stop all the coaches, &c. that would pass the streets after sun-set, except those of physicians, surgeons, and midwives.

Fourth. Every morning, as soon as the sun rises, let all the bells in every church be set ringing; and if that is not sufficient, let cannon be fired in every street, to wake the sluggards effectually, and make them open their eyes to see their true interest.

All the difficulty will be in the first two or three days; after which the reformation will be as natural <sup>30</sup> and easy as the present irregularity; for, *ce n'est que le premier pas qui coûte*.<sup>66</sup> Oblige a man to rise at four in the morning, and it is more than probable he will go willingly to bed at eight in the evening; and, having had eight hours sleep, he will rise more willingly at four in the morning following. But this sum of ninety-six millions and seventy-five thousand livres is not the whole of what may be saved by my economical project. You may observe, that I have calculated upon only one half of the year, and much may be <sup>40</sup> saved in the other, though the days are shorter. Besides, the immense stock of wax and tallow left unconsumed during the summer, will probably make candles much cheaper for the ensuing winter, and continue them cheaper as long as the proposed reformation shall be supported.

For the great benefit of this discovery, thus freely communicated and bestowed by me on the public, I

<sup>65</sup> "Nothing is to be despaired of."

<sup>66</sup> It is only the first step that costs.



demand neither place, pension, exclusive privilege, nor any other reward whatever. I expect only to have the honour of it. And yet I know there are little, envious minds, who will, as usual, deny me this, and say, that my invention was known to the ancients, and perhaps they may bring passages out of the old books in proof of it. I will not dispute with these people, that the ancients knew not the sun would rise at certain hours; they possibly had, as we have, almanacs that predicted it; but it does not follow <sup>10</sup> thence, that they knew *he gave light as soon as he rose*. This is what I claim as my discovery. If the ancients knew it, it might have been long since forgotten; for it certainly was unknown to the moderns, at least to the Parisians, which to prove, I need use but one plain simple argument. They are as well instructed, judicious, and prudent a people as exist anywhere in the world, all professing, like myself, to be lovers of economy; and, from the many heavy taxes required from them by the necessities of the <sup>20</sup> state, have surely an abundant reason to be economical. I say it is impossible that so sensible a people, under such circumstances, should have lived so long by the smoky, unwholesome, and enormously expensive light of candles, if they had really known, that they might have had as much pure light of the sun for nothing. I am, &c.

A Subscriber.

To Samuel Mather

Passy, May 12, 1784.

Rev<sup>d</sup> Sir,

I received your kind letter, with your excellent advice to the people of the United States, which I read with great pleasure, and hope it will be duly regarded. Such writings, though they may be lightly passed over by many readers, yet, if they make a deep impression on one active mind in a hundred, the effects may be considerable. Permit me to mention <sup>40</sup> one little instance, which, though it relates to myself, will not be quite uninteresting to you. When I was a boy, I met with a book, entitled "*Essays to do Good*," which I think was written by your father. It had been so little regarded by a former possessor, that several leaves of it were torn out; but the remainder gave me such a turn of thinking, as to have an influence on my conduct through life; for I have always set a greater value on the character of a *doer of good*,

than on any other kind of reputation; and if I have been, as you seem to think, a useful citizen, the public owes the advantage of it to that book.

You mention your being in your 78<sup>th</sup> year; I am in my 79<sup>th</sup>; we are grown old together. It is now more than 60 years since I left Boston, but I remember well both your father and grandfather, having heard them both in the pulpit, and seen them in their houses. The last time I saw your father was in the beginning of 1724, when I visited him after my first trip to Pennsylvania. He received me in his library, and on my taking leave showed me a shorter way out of the house through a narrow passage, which was crossed by a beam over head. We were still talking as I withdrew, he accompanying me behind, and I turning partly towards him, when he said hastily, "*Stoop, stoop!*" I did not understand him, till I felt my head hit against the beam. He was a man that never missed any occasion of giving instruction, and upon this he said to me, "*You are young, and have the world before you; stoop as you go through it, and you will miss many hard thumps.*" This advice, thus beat into my head, has frequently been of use to me; and I often think of it, when I see pride mortified, and misfortunes brought upon people by their carrying their heads too high.

I long much to see again my native place, and to lay my bones there. I left it in 1723; I visited it in 1733, 1743, 1753, and 1763. In 1773 I was in Eng-  
<sup>30</sup> land; in 1775 I had a sight of it, but could not enter, it being in possession of the enemy. I did hope to have been there in 1783, but could not obtain my dismissal from this employment here; and now I fear I shall never have that happiness. My best wishes however attend my dear country. *Esto perpetua.*<sup>67</sup> It is now blest with an excellent constitution; may it last for ever!

This powerful monarchy continues its friendship for the United States. It is a friendship of the utmost importance to our security, and should be carefully cultivated. Britain has not yet well digested the loss of its dominion over us, and has still at times some flattering hopes of recovering it. Accidents may increase those hopes, and encourage dangerous attempts. A breach between us and France would infallibly bring the English again upon our backs; and yet we have some wild heads among our countrymen, who are endeavouring to weaken that connexion! Let

<sup>67</sup> May she be perpetual.

us preserve our reputation by performing our engagements; our credit by fulfilling our contracts; and friends by gratitude and kindness; for we know not how soon we may again have occasion for all of them. With great and sincere esteem, I have the honour to be, &c.

B. Franklin.

To Thomas Paine<sup>68</sup> [?]

Phila. July 3, 1786[?].

Dear Sir,

I have read your Manuscript with some Attention. By the Argument it contains against the Doctrines of a particular Providence, tho' you allow a general Providence, you strike at the Foundation of all Religion. For without the Belief of a Providence, that takes Cognizance of, guards, and guides, and may favour particular Persons, there is no Motive to Worship a Deity, to fear its Displeasure, or to pray for its Protection. I will not enter into any Discussion of your Principles, tho' you seem to desire it. At present I shall only give you my Opinion, that, though your Reasonings are subtle, and may prevail with some Readers, you will not succeed so as to change the general Sentiments of Mankind on that Subject, and the Consequence of printing this Piece will be, a great deal of Odium drawn upon yourself, Mischief to you, and no Benefit to others. He that spits against the Wind, spits in his own Face.

But, were you to succeed, do you imagine any Good would be done by it? You yourself may find it easy to live a virtuous Life, without the Assistance afforded by Religion; you having a clear Perception of the Advantages of Virtue, and the Disadvantages of Vice, and possessing a Strength of Resolution sufficient to enable you to resist common Temptations. But think how great a Proportion of Mankind consists of weak and ignorant Men and Women, and of inexperience'd, and inconsiderate Youth of both Sexes, who have need of the Motives of Religion to restrain them from Vice, to support their Virtue, and retain them in the Practice of it till it becomes

<sup>68</sup> While it has been pointed out that Paine's deistical writings were not published until after this letter was presumably written, it has also been observed that a part of *The Age of Reason* (1793-1795) was composed before 1781. It is altogether likely that Paine sent Franklin his manuscript for a preview. At any rate, Franklin's letter contains just such prudential advice as he would have offered an old friend to prevent his committing an indiscretion.

*habitual*, which is the great Point for its Security. And perhaps you are indebted to her originally, that is, to your Religious Education, for the Habits of Virtue upon which you now justly value yourself. You might easily display your excellent Talents of reasoning upon a less hazardous subject, and thereby obtain a Rank with our most distinguish'd Authors. For among us it is not necessary, as among the Hottentots, that a Youth, to be receiv'd into the Company of men, should prove his Manhood by beating his Mother.

I would advise you, therefore, not to attempt unchaining the Tyger, but to burn this Piece before it is seen by any other Person; whereby you will save yourself a great deal of Mortification from the Enemies it may raise against you, and perhaps a good deal of Regret and Repentance. If men are so wicked as we now see them *with religion*, what would they be *if without it*. I intend this Letter itself as a *Proof* of my Friendship, and therefore add no *Professions* to it; but subscribe simply yours,

B. F.

On the Slave-Trade<sup>69</sup>

To the Editor of the Federal Gazette

March 23d, 1790.

Sir,

Reading last night in your excellent Paper the speech of Mr. Jackson in Congress against their meddling with the Affair of Slavery, or attempting to mend the Condition of the Slaves, it put me in mind of a similar One made about 100 Years since by Sidi Mehemet Ibrahim, a member of the Divan of Algiers, which may be seen in Martin's Account of his Consulship, anno 1687. It was against granting the Petition of the Sect called *Erika*, or Purists, who pray'd for the Abolition of Piracy and Slavery as being unjust. Mr. Jackson does not quote it; perhaps he has

<sup>69</sup> This pretended African speech was an excellent parody of one delivered by Mr. Jackson, of Georgia, in the House of Representatives a few days before. Franklin not only wrote against slavery but, as President of the Pennsylvania Society for the Abolition of Slavery, he was active in trying to prevent the importation of slaves. Considering his life-long humanitarian efforts, it was altogether fitting that his last public act was to appear before the House of Representatives on February 12, 1789, to present a memorial urging the Congress to exert its full powers to discourage the traffic in human beings. His ironic letter on the slave-trade, in which the African Musselmen turn the tables on the American Christians, was written early in 1790. He died on April 17 of the same year.

not seen it. If, therefore, some of its Reasonings are to be found in his eloquent Speech, it may only show that men's Interests and Intellects operate and are operated on with surprising similarity in all Countries and Climates, when under similar Circumstances. The African's Speech, as translated, is as follows.

*"Allah Bismillah, &c. God is great, and Mahomet is his Prophet.*

"Have these *Erika* considered the Consequences of 10 granting their Petition? If we cease our Cruises against the Christians, how shall we be furnished with the Commodities their Countries produce, and which are so necessary for us? If we forbear to make Slaves of their People, who in this hot Climate are to cultivate our Lands? Who are to perform the common Labours of our City, and in our Families? Must we not then be our own Slaves? And is there not more Compassion and more Favour due to us as Mussulmen, than to these Christian Dogs? We have 20 now above 50,000 Slaves in and near Algiers. This Number, if not kept up by fresh Supplies, will soon diminish, and be gradually annihilated. If we then cease taking and plundering the Infidel Ships, and making Slaves of the Seamen and Passengers, our Lands will become of no Value for want of Cultivation; the Rents of Houses in the City will sink one half; and the Revenues of Government arising from its Share of Prizes be totally destroy'd! And for what? To gratify the whims of a whimsical Sect, who would 30 have us, not only forbear making more Slaves, but even to manumit those we have.

"But who is to indemnify their Masters for the Loss? Will the State do it? Is our Treasury sufficient? Will the *Erika* do it? Can they do it? Or would they, to do what they think Justice to the Slaves, do a greater Injustice to the Owners? And if we set our Slaves free, what is to be done with them? Few of them will return to their Countries; they know too well the greater Hardships they must there be sub-40 ject to; they will not embrace our holy Religion; they will not adopt our Manners; our People will not pollute themselves by intermarrying with them. Must we maintain them as Beggars in our Streets, or suffer our Properties to be the Prey of their Pillage? For Men long accusom'd to Slavery will not work for a Livelihood when not compell'd. And what is there so pitiable in their present Condition? Were they not Slaves in their own Countries?

"Are not Spain, Portugal, France, and the Italian states govern'd by Despots, who hold all their Subjects in Slavery, without Exception? Even England treats its Sailors as Slaves; for they are, whenever the Government pleases, seiz'd, and confin'd in Ships of War, condemn'd not only to work, but to fight, for small Wages, or a mere Subsistence, not better than our Slaves are allow'd by us. Is their Condition then made worse by their falling into our Hands? No; they have only exchanged one Slavery for another, and I may say a better; for here they are brought into a Land where the Sun of Islamism gives forth its Light, and shines in full Splendor, and they have an Opportunity of making themselves acquainted with the true Doctrine, and thereby saving their immortal Souls. Those who remain at home have not that Happiness. Sending the Slaves home then would be sending them out of Light into Darkness.

"I repeat the Question, What is to be done with them? I have heard it suggested, that they may be planted in the Wilderness, where there is plenty of Land for them to subsist on, and where they may flourish as a free State; but they are, I doubt, too little dispos'd to labour without Compulsion, as well as too ignorant to establish a good government, and the wild Arabs would soon molest and destroy or again enslave them. While serving us, we take care to provide them with every thing, and they are treated with Humanity. The Labourers in their own Country are, as I am well informed, worse fed, lodged, and cloathed. The Condition of most of them is therefore already mended, and requires no further Improvement. Here their Lives are in Safety. They are not liable to be impress'd for Soldiers, and forc'd to cut one another's Christian Throats, as in the Wars of their own Countries. If some of the religious mad Bigots, who now teaze us with their silly Petitions, have in a Fit of blind Zeal freed their Slaves, it was not Generosity, it was not Humanity, that mov'd them to the Action; it was from the conscious Burthen of a Load of Sins, and Hope, from the supposed Merits of so good a Work, to be excus'd Damnation.

"How grossly are they mistaken in imagining Slavery to be disallow'd by the Alcoran! Are not the two Precepts, to quote no more, '*Masters, treat your Slaves with kindness; Slaves, serve your Masters with Cheerfulness and Fidelity*,' clear Proofs to the contrary? Nor can the Plundering of Infidels be in that sacred Book forbidden, since it is well known from

it, that God has given the World, and all that it contains, to his faithful Mussulmen, who are to enjoy it of Right as fast as they conquer it. Let us then hear no more of this detestable Proposition, the Manu- mission of Christian Slaves, the Adoption of which would, by depreciating our Lands and Houses, and thereby depriving so many good Citizens of their Properties, create universal Discontent, and provoke Insurrections, to the endangering of Government and producing general Confusion. I have therefore no doubt, but this wise Council will prefer the Comfort and Happiness of a whole Nation of true Believers to the Whim of a few *Erika*, and dismiss their Petition."

The Result was, as Martin tells us, that the Divan

came to this Resolution; "The Doctrine, that Plundering and Enslaving the Christians is unjust, is at best *problematical*; but that it is the Interest of this State to continue the Practice, is clear; therefore let the Petition be rejected."

And it was rejected accordingly.

And since like Motives are apt to produce in the Minds of Men like Opinions and Resolutions, may we not, Mr. Brown, venture to predict, from this Account, that the Petitions to the Parliament of England for abolishing the Slave-Trade, to say nothing of other Legislatures, and the Debates upon them, will have a similar Conclusion? I am, Sir, your constant Reader and humble Servant,

Historicus.

## THOMAS PAINE (1737-1809)

Variously apostrophized as the "Author-Hero of the American Revolution," "the ragged philosopher," "the Creator of Independent Democracy in America," and "a drunken infidel," Thomas Paine is "the epitome of a world in revolution." No American author did more for America by his writings than he, and none of his generation suffered greater ingratitude and calumny at the hands of his fellow citizens. A citizen of three nations, he came to be a man without a country. His native England outlawed him; as a citizen of France, he was imprisoned and long in danger of execution; the United States of America, which no one labored more than he to bring into being, subsequently denied him citizenship and heaped obloquy upon him. Yet his writings, which netted him little profit, were the most influential in the era of the American Revolution, and he must be rated as one of the three or four most powerful propagandists of ideas in the history of the world. His philosophy was as simple as it was broad: "The world is my country; to do good, my religion." Republicanism and deism have had more erudite, profound, and subtle proponents, but they never had a more eloquent, forthright, and sincere advocate than Tom Paine. Much of the odium that still attaches to his name and memory is owing to his religious creed, enunciated in *The Age of Reason* (1794-1795). Published at the height of the conservative reaction against the French Revolution, its outspokenly deistic attack on Christianity alienated the conservatives; his name became anathema to succeeding generations who were led by prejudice or ignorance to repeat with John Adams and Theodore Roosevelt the charge of "filthy little atheist." Actually his religion was no more reprehensible than was Franklin's. Both were scientific deists who derived their religious beliefs from the scientific principles current in their day. Their chief difference lay in the fact that Franklin prudently kept his religious opinions private, while Paine, bent on converting mankind to what he conceived as the true religion, boldly published his views and drew upon himself the hatred of "right-thinking Christians," Franklin, for his part, becoming enshrined in their memories as a saint.

When, on the last day of November, 1774, Thomas Paine arrived in Philadelphia, he was (except for Franklin's letter of recommendation that he carried in his pocket) far worse off than Franklin had been some fifty years earlier when he walked down Market Street with a roll of bread under each arm. Nearly thirty-eight years of age, he was already what the world called a failure. Since his birth in 1737, the son of a poor stay-maker in Thetford, England, Paine had encountered little good fortune in life beyond acquiring from his Quaker father and Anglican mother "a good moral education" and picking up "a tolerable stock of useful learning," though he knew no language but his own. Born a Friend, he became an independent rationalist and humanitarian, practicing Quaker doctrines. Although he laughed when he thought of the sad world the Quakers would have made of the creation if they had been consulted, and reproved them for their pacifistic refusal to fight for principle, his last will requested that his body be interred in a Quaker burying-ground if they would admit "a person who does not belong to their society."

Tiring of his father's trade of corset-making, and lusting for adventure, he tried, as a lad of seventeen, to enlist on Captain Death's privateer, the *Terrible*; but this first independent venture ended ingloriously when he was nabbed by his father just before the ship could sail and put back to stay-making. Shortly thereafter, however, he shipped on the *King of Prussia*, but one cruise on a licensed pirate ship was enough for him, and disconsolately he settled back to making stays.

He pursued the trade for several years at various places with indifferent success, while devoting his leisure time to studying philosophy and astronomy. In 1759 he married Mary Lambert, only to lose her by death the next year. Again tiring of stay-making, he secured a government appointment as an exciseman in 1764, and two years later was dismissed, reputedly for neglect of duty. Next he turned schoolteacher, served as usher in an academy, practiced stay-making for brief periods, turned an honest penny by occasionally ascending some pulpit or other to preach his gospel to such saints and sinners as would hear him, and

at one time considered taking holy orders. After a prayerful petition and a promise to do better, he was reappointed to the excise in 1768. In 1771, still an exciseman, he married Elizabeth Ollive, a young lady with whom he was already in partnership as grocer and tobacconist. Three years later he was again dismissed from the excise on the charges that he had neglected his duties without leave of the Board, and that he had not paid his debts. Another complication appears to have been his writing in 1773 of an appeal addressed to Parliament asking better pay for excisemen. A few days after his dismissal, all his effects personal and otherwise, were sold at auction for the benefit of his creditors; and about the same time he signed papers of separation from his wife, the arrangement apparently being entirely amicable, since neither party had found their union either profitable or particularly happy.

A disconsolate bankrupt, he betook himself to London, where he consulted with Franklin about prospects in America. Something in the young man impressed Franklin sufficiently to give him a letter of introduction commending Paine as "an ingenious and worthy young man" and recommending him as "a clerk, or assistant in a school, or assistant surveyor." Franklin's letter opened to him pleasant relations with some of the best people in Philadelphia. He went to work for Robert Aitken, then about to launch the *Pennsylvania Magazine or American Museum*, and soon became its editor. A complete failure in England, he resolved to make something of himself in America. He worked diligently as a journalist, haunted the bookshops, adroitly pushed his way into an acquaintance with the leading citizens just then congregating in Philadelphia, and kept eyes and ears open to gather all facts, impressions, and opinions then being generated by the quarrel between his native country and the land of his adoption. His contribution to the first number of the *Pennsylvania Magazine* started him on his successful career as a propagandist, the collected results of which fill ten volumes. His essays soon established him as one of the moral pioneers of his generation. He advocated international arbitration, attacked dueling, suggested rational ideas of marriage and divorce, pleaded for mercy to animals, argued for the need of international copyright, demanded justice for women, and assailed Negro slavery. His articles against slavery are reputed to have led directly to the formation of the first antislavery society in Philadelphia. Indeed, the abolition of slavery was a cause for which he fought constantly; and when, years later, he became the target of religious persecution, it was in their dual

capacity as Christians and slaveholders that Americans reviled him.

Keeping his finger on the pulse of the people and training his ear to catch the shifting winds of popular feeling and opinion, he guardedly kept his peace until he was sure of himself and of the people whom he hoped to lead if given half a chance. He familiarized himself with what James Otis had said in opposition to the Writs of Assistance in 1762, and he reviewed the legalistic arguments of John Dickinson and of Samuel Adams protesting the Stamp Act while taking care not to deny the right of Parliament to levy taxes. He familiarized himself with the issues involved in the Declaratory Acts of 1766, the Boston Massacre (March, 1770), the Boston Tea Party (December 16, 1773), the acts and resolutions of the First Continental Congress (1774), and the flood of pamphlets, essays, and public letters that followed in their wake. He carefully gauged the rise of feeling following the skirmishes at Lexington and Concord on April 19, 1775. He watched the Second Continental Congress, which began its session on May 10; he tried to interpret the effect of the Battle of Bunker Hill (June 17), of the selection of Washington as commander of the Army (June 15), and of the final breakdown of arbitration when England rejected American petitions and the colonies refused proffered compromises during the latter part of 1775. Six months after the fiery Virginian, Patrick Henry, made the speech about "Liberty or Death" (urging armed resistance but saying nothing about independence), Tom Paine had made up his mind to take the next step, highly treasonable though he knew it to be. He would propose not merely resistance, but independence. On October 18, 1775, writing in the *Pennsylvania Journal*, he said: "I hesitate not for a moment to believe that the Almighty will finally separate America from Britain. Call it Independence or what you will, if it is the cause of God and humanity, it will go on." This was nine months before the Declaration of Independence.

Few were ready for the idea of separation. The revolt had begun with a limited object. Very few realized whither they were heading; none knew what the outcome would be. They still argued over legalities and constitutional rights and loyalties. It would require a severe jolt to jar them out of their accustomed modes of thinking. Paine had had enough experience as a propagandist to realize, as he said, "It is necessary to be bold. Some people can be reasoned into sense, and others must be shocked into it. Say a bold thing that will stagger them and they will begin to think. . . . I deal not in hints and inti-

mations. . . . I bring reason to your ears, and in language as plain as A, B, C, hold up truth to your eyes."

Lexington and Concord had prepared the people to be receptive and ready for anything, and Paine, waiting just so long as was necessary but no longer, seized exactly the right moment to publish *Common Sense* on January 10, 1776, to show that any man who used his common sense could do nothing other than demand separation and fight for independence. The time had come to act.

Friends and enemies agree in ascribing to Paine's pamphlet an unexampled effect. In three months, 120,000 copies were sold—an event hitherto unequalled in the history of American printing. So that it might have the widest possible circulation, Paine put the price of *Common Sense* so low that while some 500,000 copies were disposed of, he found himself in the end indebted to the printer. But he achieved his purpose: the little pamphlet inspired a rebellion and created a nation.

The essay is happily entitled *Common Sense* because that was all Paine had to bring to bear on the subject, concerning whose legal points he knew nothing. Instead of arguing the legalistic issues involved in the contest, he brushed aside as irrelevant all technical questions and appealed his case to the tribunal of common sense—to the rank and file who knew no law, but who felt nonetheless strongly. He always maintained, law or no law, that what a whole people chooses to do it has a right to do. While professing to address only the common sense and reason of men, he never lost an opportunity to rouse also their feelings and passions. Employing exaggeration, misrepresentation, invective, and satire, Paine used all the tricks of the political agitator to break down traditional loyalty to England and to build up a spirit of active rebellion. It was ridiculous, he argued, for free men in America to remain any longer bound subjects of Great Britain: that they were free men and should assume the rights of independent American citizens, and that nothing stood in their way but the trash of a few pedants like John Dickinson, who still argued about legalities and constitutionality, and other timid souls who still respected the authority of certain ruffians and brutes called kings.

Accordingly Part I of his epoch-making pamphlet begins with a rhapsodical and sword-rattling overture of sweeping affirmations and pungent observations concerning government in general and of the English government in particular—all intended to rid the colonial mind of any undue reverence it still had for

organized or legal authority and to convince the people that the hour had arrived "to legalize disobedience to law."

"Society is produced by our wants," Paine begins, "and government by our wickedness. . . . Society in every state is a blessing, but government, even in its best state, is but a necessary evil; in its worst state, an intolerable one. . . . Government, like dress, is the badge of lost innocence; the palaces of kings are built on the ruins of the bowers of paradise." Such, says Paine, is the origin of government. Its objects are twofold: freedom and security. But the British government affords us neither.

Part II is a discussion of monarchy and hereditary succession. In reply to the query about the true form of government, Paine answers that whatever it is, it is not monarchy. The government which rests on "the distinction of men into kings and subjects" is one for which no "natural or religious reason can be assigned."

Male and female are the distinctions of nature, good and bad, the distinctions of heaven; but how a race of men came into the world so exalted above the rest, and distinguished like some new species, is worth inquiring into, and whether they are the means of happiness or misery to mankind. . . . The nearer any government approaches to a republic, the less business there is for a king. . . .

In England a king hath little more to do than to make war and give away places; which in plain terms is to impoverish the nation and set it together by the ears. A pretty business indeed for a man to be allowed eight hundred thousand sterling a year for, and worshipped into the bargain! Of more worth is one honest man to society, and in the sight of God, than all the crowned ruffians that ever lived.

Part III presents some "thoughts on the Present State of the American Affairs" to show that "the period of debate is closed. Arms as the last recourse, must decide the contest. . . . All plans, proposals, &c. [for reconciliation] prior to the nineteenth of April [1775], i. e., to the commencement of hostilities [at Lexington and Concord], are like the almanacs of the last year."

Aside from the fact that America has nothing to gain by her continued connection with England, but much to lose, Paine argued that it is "repugnant to reason, to the universal order of things, to all examples from former ages, to suppose that this continent can long remain subject to any external power." There is something preposterous in the idea that a great nation on one side of the Atlantic shall remain in a state of permanent vassalage to a small island on the other side; while to be "always running

three or four thousand miles with a tale or a petition, waiting four or five months for an answer, which, when obtained, requires five or six more to explain it in, will in a few years be looked upon as folly and childishness. There was a time when it was proper, and there is a proper time for it to cease."

Small islands not capable of protecting themselves are the proper objects for governments to take under their care; but there is something absurd in supposing a continent to be perpetually governed by an island. In no instance hath nature made the satellite larger than its primary planet; and as England and America, with respect to each other, reverse the common order of nature, it is evident that they belong to different systems. England to Europe: America to itself.

After offering a plan by which the thirteen colonies can effectively unite in a representative democratic form of government, Paine proceeds to the fourth and last part, "On the Present Ability of America, with Some Miscellaneous Reflections," designed to convince the people that armed resistance will be attended by success. "Nothing," he concludes, "can settle our affairs so expeditiously as an open and determined DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE." "O ye that love mankind! Ye that dare oppose, not only the tyranny but the tyrant, stand forth!" In an appendix added to later editions, Paine closed with the declaration: "We have it in our power to begin the world over again. . . . The birthday of a new world is at hand . . . the FREE AND INDEPENDENT STATES OF AMERICA."

Paine's challenge at the strategic moment "proved to be the deciding word." Dr. Benjamin Rush acknowledged the pamphlet's effect such as had been "rarely produced by types and paper, in any age or country." Major General Lee, writing to Washington, called it "the *coup-de-grace* to Great Britain"; and Washington himself, fighting an undeclared war since June of the preceding year and wanting a decisive declaration, wrote on January 31, 1776:

A few more such flaming arguments as we exhibited at Falmouth and Norfolk, added to the sound doctrine and unanswerable reasoning contained in the pamphlet *Common Sense*, will not leave numbers at a loss to decide on the propriety of a separation.

The separation came five months later, on July 4, 1776.

Despite its crudities of thought, its superficiality, its rashness of assertion, the pamphlet was a master-stroke. Its smattering of historical lore, its cheap display of statistics, and its clumsy attempts at a political philosophy were no deterrents either to Tom

Paine or to the people, who just then cared more about imperiled rights than about either learning or philosophy.

Not content to fight with his pen alone, Paine shouldered a musket as a private and was soon raised to the position of aide-de-camp to General Greene. The fortunes of war turned against the patriots. By the end of 1776 the desertion of soldiers, encouraged by short-term enlistment, had grown to alarming proportions, and Washington's retreat across the Delaware seemed catastrophic. General Washington himself confided to his brother on December 18, 1776: "Between you and me, I think our affairs are in a very bad situation. . . . If every nerve is not strained up to the utmost to recruit the new army with all possible expedition, I think the game is very near up."

Again, Paine's pen came to the rescue. In January he had opened the immortal year of '76 with *Common Sense*, a call to decision; in December, he closed the year with the first of a series of sixteen papers called *The Crisis*, a call to action. It opened with the stirring lines:

These are the times that try men's souls. The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of his country; but he that stands it *now*, deserves the love and thanks of man and woman. Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered; yet we have this consolation with us, that the harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph.

The first of the *Crisis* papers attempts to reconstruct American confidence in its own powers. It stimulated enlistment in the new army, and Washington ordered a copy read to every regiment. By January 13, 1777, the second installment appeared in the form of a letter to Lord Howe, commiserating with the noble lord, enumerating his insuperable difficulties in attempting a conquest of a vast country with a handful of soldiers. Next he charges Howe with being a wanton marauder and pillager, and returns to sympathize with him in the hopelessness and folly of his undertaking—mocking, advising, and blasting him all at once. It is good propaganda, and it provoked many a chuckle round the campfires of weary, disheartened American soldiers. The third paper, issued on the anniversary of Lexington and Concord, returns to a discussion of the principles at stake in the contest, and so on until the last number appeared on December 9, 1783, seven years (lacking a day) from the time No. 1 had appeared.

The sixteen papers fall into three time groups: seven in the first two years, three between March and October, 1780, and six in the last twenty-one months



of the war. The first are divided between defiance of British power and denunciation of political doctrine. The middle three aim at discouraging the British and inspiring Americans with renewed zeal and effort. The last six press the offensive and lead up to the discussion of peace. Thus he kept up, throughout the war years, his incessant harangue and irresistible bombardment of the American conscience (military and civilian), playing with matchless skill and power upon all the springs of human anxiety, resolution, anger, fear, contempt, hatred, fortitude, duty, honor, patriotism, self-interest, and love of fame. How he found time to do it remains a mystery, for during the early years of the war he shared every service, action, and privation of the army, even to enduring the winter at Valley Forge with Washington.

In 1777 he was elected secretary to the Committee of Foreign Affairs of the Continental Congress, a post which he resigned in 1779; and later in the same year he was elected clerk of the Pennsylvania Assembly. During 1781 he sailed for France and successfully negotiated a large loan for the American cause. For his services as penman, soldier, and diplomat, he was awarded several sizable gifts of money and a confiscated Royalist estate at New Rochelle, N. Y. At the conclusion of the war he went to Bordentown, N. J., to devote himself to his inventions, which included a smokeless candle and the perfection of an iron bridge without piers.

But these were tame pursuits. Franklin had declared, "Wherever is liberty, there is my home"; Paine countered, "Wherever is not liberty, there is my home." Accordingly, when the political struggle for greater liberty in France and England became intense, Paine, having fomented one rebellion by a pamphlet, and looking for a new revolution, hied himself off to France in 1787. During 1787-1792 he shuttled back and forth between Paris and London, arranging for the patenting and building of his bridge and promoting political rebellion. Shortly after the fall of the Bastille, he went to Paris to observe the Revolution. It was then that Lafayette entrusted to him the key of the Bastille, bidding him to bear it safely to America as a symbol of despotism overthrown in France as it had been in America. Paine became the natural link of the revolutionary spirit that had already succeeded in the New World, that was in progress in France, and, as was ardently hoped, that would soon sweep England also. Back in London by February of 1791, he published the first part of his *Rights of Man*, in reply to Burke's *Reflections on the French Revolution* (1790), followed by a second part a year later. Both breathed political radi-

calism of a kind not countenanced in England, just then experiencing a strong feeling of revulsion at the excesses of the French Revolution. Paine was summoned to stand trial as the author of a libelous work. During the ensuing delays and postponements, he made good his opportunities to make his way secretly to France—and none too soon, for a half hour after he sailed from Dover the order for his arrest arrived.

In France he was welcomed warmly. He was chosen as a representative from Calais in the General Assembly, and the title of Citizen of France was conferred upon him. In the meantime he enjoyed informing the London judges, who had ordered him to return and stand trial, that he was too busy in Paris with important matters to accommodate their wishes, but that they might proceed against him during his absence—which is what they did, and would have done in any case.

A leader from the first, he exercised a powerful influence for moderation while the Girondin party was in power, speaking against the guillotine and holding out for humane and just procedures. In the end, however, as the power passed more and more into the hands of the more radical Jacobins and the mob, he lost influence. His valiant efforts to save the life of the King and Queen brought him under suspicion, and on December 23, 1793, he was confined in the Luxembourg Prison.

Seeing atheism making great gains on every hand in France, and having conceived the idea of checking it by giving the French people his rationale of a deistic, moral, and natural religion, he wrote furiously to complete Part I of *The Age of Reason*, and a few hours before he was carted off to prison he managed to put the manuscript into the hands of Joel Barlow, who arranged for its publication in January, 1794. Declaring his American citizenship, he demanded to be released, but the American government did nothing to help him, and he languished in prison until after the fall of Robespierre. He was marked for the guillotine several times. Once he escaped because the guard chalked the mark designating him for execution on the inside of his cell door while it stood open. Paine lost no time erasing the fatal mark. At another time he was saved because when the guards came to carry him before the tribunal, he was lying in a state of insensibility from fever occasioned by poor care and prison food. On November 4, 1794, James Monroe, the American Ambassador to France, finally secured his release, and took him into his home for the next eighteen months to give him a chance to recuperate. During the ten months that he had lain in prison he had employed

his time, whenever he was able, to write portions of Part II of *The Age of Reason*, published in 1795. This book brought down upon him the attacks of the orthodox, and the ill will toward him was intensified in 1796 when he published his *Letter to George Washington*, upbraiding him for folding his arms as President in America while his erstwhile comrade-in-arms languished in prison in France.

Paine's truculent attack upon the British had endeared him to all patriots in America, but when he turned to attack Christianity with the same ferocity, many of his friends shrank from him. And it must be admitted that he drove his points home with reckless abandon, as when, on the first page of *The Age of Reason*, he wrote:

I believe in one God, and no more. . . . I do not believe in the creed professed by the Jewish church, by the Roman church, by the Greek church, by the Turkish church, by the Protestant church, nor by any church that I know of. My own mind is my own church.

Part I is a destructive inquiry into the bases of Christianity, its theology, its mysteries, miracles, prophecies, and revelations; and Part II is a critical examination of the Old and New Testaments to support the negative conclusions and inferences of the first part. Concluding that the "Word of God is the creation we behold," he reiterates the charge that "the bible and testament are impositions and forgeries," and that "of all the religions that ever were invented, there is none more derogatory to the Almighty, more unedifying to men, more repugnant to reason, and more contradictory in itself, than this thing called Christianity."

Too absurd for belief, too impossible to convince, and too inconsistent for practice, it renders the heart torpid or produces only atheists and fanatics. As an engine of power, it serves the purpose of despotism; and as a means of wealth, the avarice of priests; but so far as respects the good of man in general, it leads to nothing here or hereafter.

Despite all its shortcomings, weaknesses of argument, and crudities of style, the writing of *The Age of Reason* was the bravest thing Paine ever did, for he must have known that it would gain him nothing. On the other hand, he must have known that his "going through the Bible," as he put it, "as a man would go through a wood with an axe on his shoulder to fell trees," would bring down upon him the wrath

of orthodox Christendom. Slaveholders, royalists, and fanatics of orthodoxy combined to condemn the man who had dared to deny the inspiration of the Bible, while the grandsons of Puritans who had hanged witches and flogged Quakers denied him a place on the stagecoach lest an offended God should strike it with lightning. Bishops in England and "Pope" Dwight at Yale fulminated against him. The consternation became complete when in 1802 Jefferson dispatched a man-of-war to France to conduct this arch-infidel safely to America, where he got a sorry reception indeed. Fanatics accosted him and damned him in public, and in 1805 an attempt was made on his life at New Rochelle, where he was denied the right to vote on the ground that he was not an American citizen.

Yet all this hubbub was beside the point. Thomas Paine's work was done. Ostracized, broken in health, and in desperate financial straits, he died on June 8, 1809. A few days later a funeral cortège of six persons, including a Frenchwoman and her two sons, a Quaker, and two Negroes, accompanied his remains and laid him away where he would do no more harm.

But, as Tom Paine himself had observed, "reason, like time, will make its own way," and the passage of the years has brought him justice and renown. Not many years after his death, in a log hut out in Illinois a lad named Abe Lincoln sat up all night to read *The Age of Reason* by the flickering light of the fireplace, and trudged twelve miles the next morning to return the book to its owner; today no other American of the Revolutionary age is so much the object of biographical and historical research as Tom Paine; and the world is coming to realize that in an age of bold men he was the bravest. He could rouse the passions, and he could brave them. He used his gifts not only in defense of democracy, but also for women, slaves, and animals. Poverty never left him, for though he made fortunes by his pen, he gave everything to the great cause he served. His fault as a man was a kind of naïve vanity that often dogs men of large mold. In a fight he often forgot the principle he recommended to all others—common sense. No half-way measures served him. It was his fate to escape the gallows in England and the guillotine in France, and either would have supplied the crown of martyrdom that he merited. Certainly a better democrat never fought tyranny, and a better Christian never assailed orthodoxy.

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## Introduction

Perhaps the sentiments contained in the following pages are not *yet* sufficiently fashionable to procure them general favor; a long habit of not thinking a thing *wrong* gives it a superficial appearance of being *right*, and raises at first a formidable outcry in defense of custom. But the tumult soon subsides. Time makes more converts than reason.

As a long and violent abuse of power is generally the means of calling the right of it in question (and in matters too which might never have been thought of, had not the sufferers been aggravated into the inquiry), and as the king of England hath undertaken in his *own right* to support the parliament in what he calls *theirs*, and as the good people of this country are grievously oppressed by the combination, they have an undoubted privilege to inquire into the pretensions of both, and equally to reject the usurpation of *either*.

In the following sheets, the author has studiously avoided everything which is personal among ourselves. Compliments as well as censure to individuals make no part thereof. The wise and the worthy need not the triumph of a pamphlet; and those whose sentiments are injudicious or unfriendly will cease of themselves, unless too much pains is bestowed upon their conversions.

<sup>1</sup> Published January 10, 1776.

The cause of America is, in a great measure, the cause of all mankind. Many circumstances have, and will arise, which are not local, but universal, and through which the principles of all lovers of mankind are affected, and in the event of which their affections are interested. The laying a country desolate with fire and sword, declaring war against the natural rights of all mankind, and extirpating the defenders thereof from the face of the earth, is the concern of every man to whom nature hath given the power of feeling; of which class, regardless of party censure, is

The Author.

I. On the Origin and Design of Government in General, with Concise Remarks on the English Constitution

Some writers have so confounded society with government as to leave little or no distinction between them; whereas they are not only different, but have different origins. Society is produced by our wants and government by our wickedness; the former promotes our happiness *positively* by uniting our affections, the latter *negatively* by restraining our vices. The one encourages intercourse, the other creates distinctions. The first is a patron, the last a punisher.

Society in every state is a blessing, but government, even in its best state, is but a necessary evil; in its worst state an intolerable one; for when we suffer or

are exposed to the same miseries *by a government*, which we might expect in a country *without government*, our calamity is heightened by reflecting that we furnish the means by which we suffer. Government, like dress, is the badge of lost innocence; the palaces of kings are built upon the ruins of the bowers of paradise. For were the impulses of conscience clear, uniform, and irresistibly obeyed, man would need no other lawgiver; but that not being the case, he finds it necessary to surrender up a part of his 10 property to furnish means for the protection of the rest; and this he is induced to do by the same prudence which in every other case advises him out of two evils to choose the least. *Wherefore*, security being the true design and end of government, it unanswerably follows that whatever *form* thereof appears most likely to ensure it to us, with the least expense and greatest benefit, is preferable to all others.

In order to gain a clear and just idea of the design 20 and end of government, let us suppose a small number of persons settled in some sequestered part of the earth, unconnected with the rest; they will then represent the first peopling of any country, or of the world. In this state of natural liberty, society will be their first thought. A thousand motives will excite them thereto; the strength of one man is so unequal to his wants, and his mind so unfitted for perpetual solitude, that he is soon obliged to seek assistance and relief of another, who in his turn requires the same. 30 Four or five united would be able to raise a tolerable dwelling in the midst of a wilderness, but *one* man might labor out the common period of life without accomplishing anything; when he had felled his timber he could not remove it, nor erect it after it was removed; hunger in the meantime would urge him to quit his work, and every different want would call him a different way. Disease, nay even misfortune, would be death; for though neither might be mortal, yet either would disable him from living, and 40 reduce him to a state in which he might rather be said to perish than to die.

Thus necessity, like a gravitating power, would soon form our newly arrived emigrants into society, the reciprocal blessings of which would supersede and render the obligations of law and government unnecessary while they remained perfectly just to each other; but as nothing but heaven is impregnable to vice, it will unavoidably happen that in proportion

as they surmount the first difficulties of emigration, which bound them together in a common cause, they will begin to relax in their duty and attachment to each other; and this remissness will point out the necessity of establishing some form of government to supply the defect of moral virtue.

Some convenient tree will afford them a state-house, under the branches of which the whole colony may assemble to deliberate on public matters. It is more than probable that their first laws will have the title only of *REGULATIONS* and be enforced by no other penalty than public disesteem. In this first parliament every man by natural right will have a seat.

But as the colony increases, the public concerns will increase likewise, and the distance at which the members may be separated will render it too inconvenient for all of them to meet on every occasion as at first, when their number was small, their habitations near, and the public concerns few and trifling. This will point out the convenience of their consenting to leave the legislative part to be managed by a select number chosen from the whole body, who are supposed to have the same concerns at stake which those have who appointed them, and who will act in the same manner as the whole body would act were they present. If the colony continue increasing, it will become necessary to augment the number of representatives, and that the interest of every part of the colony may be attended to, it will be found best to divide the whole into convenient parts, each part sending its proper number; and that the *elected* might never form to themselves an interest separate from the *electors*, prudence will point out the propriety of having elections often, because as the *elected* might by that means return and mix again with the general body of the *electors* in a few months, their fidelity to the public will be secured by the prudent reflection of not making a rod for themselves. And as this frequent interchange will establish a common interest with every part of the community, they will mutually and naturally support each other, and on this (not on the unmeaning name of king) depends the *strength of government and the happiness of the governed*.

Here then is the origin and rise of government; namely, a mode rendered necessary by the inability of moral virtue to govern the world; here too is the design and end of government, viz., freedom and

security. And however our eyes may be dazzled with show or our ears deceived by sound; however prejudice may warp our wills or interest darken our understanding, the simple voice of nature and reason will say, it is right.

I draw my idea of the form of government from a principle in nature which no art can overturn, viz. that the more simple anything is, the less liable it is to be disordered, and the easier repaired when disordered; and with this maxim in view, I offer a few remarks on the so much boasted constitution of England. That it was noble for the dark and slavish times in which it was erected, is granted. When the world was overrun with tyranny, the least remove therefrom was a glorious rescue. But that it is imperfect, subject to convulsions, and incapable of producing what it seems to promise, is easily demonstrated.

Absolute governments (though the disgrace of human nature) have this advantage with them, they are simple; if the people suffer, they know the head from which their suffering springs; know likewise the remedy; and are not bewildered by a variety of causes and cures. But the constitution of England is so exceedingly complex that the nation may suffer for years together without being able to discover in which part the fault lies; some will say in one and some in another, and every political physician will advise a different medicine.

I know it is difficult to get over local or long standing prejudices, yet if we will suffer ourselves to examine the component parts of the English constitution, we shall find them to be the base remains of two ancient tyrannies, compounded with some new republican materials.

*First.*—The remains of monarchical tyranny in the person of the King.

*Secondly.*—The remains of aristocratical tyranny in the persons of the Peers.

*Thirdly.*—The new republican materials, in the persons of the Commons, on whose virtue depends the freedom of England.

The two first, by being hereditary, are independent of the people; wherefore in a *constitutional sense* they contribute nothing towards the freedom of the state.

To say that the constitution of England is a *union* of three powers, reciprocally *checking*<sup>2</sup> each other, is

<sup>2</sup> Montesquieu had put such an interpretation upon the British constitution.

farcical; either the words have no meaning, or they are flat contradictions.

To say that the commons is a check upon the king, presupposes two things.

*First.*—That the king is not to be trusted without being looked after; or in other words, that a thirst for absolute power is the natural disease of monarchy.

*Secondly.*—That the commons, by being appointed for that purpose, are either wiser or more worthy of confidence than the crown.

But as the same constitution which gives the commons a power to check the king by withholding the supplies, gives afterwards the king a power to check the commons, by empowering him to reject their other bills; it again supposes that the king is wiser than those whom it has already supposed to be wiser than him. A mere absurdity!

There is something exceedingly ridiculous in the composition of monarchy; it first excludes a man from the means of information, yet empowers him to act in cases where the highest judgment is required. The state of a king shuts him from the world, yet the business of a king requires him to know it thoroughly; wherefore the different parts, by unnaturally opposing and destroying each other, prove the whole character to be absurd and useless.

Some writers have explained the English constitution thus: the king, say they, is one, the people another; the peers are a house in behalf of the king, the commons in behalf of the people; but this hath all the distinctions of a house divided against itself; and though the expressions be pleasantly arranged, yet when examined they appear idle and ambiguous; and it will always happen that the nicest construction that words are capable of, when applied to the description of something which either cannot exist or is too incomprehensible to be within the compass of description, will be words of sound only, and though they may amuse the ear, they cannot inform the mind; for this explanation includes a previous question, viz. *how came the king by a power which the people are afraid to trust, and always obliged to check?* Such a power could not be the gift of a wise people, neither can any power, *which needs checking*, be from God; yet the provision which the constitution makes supposes such a power to exist.

But the provision is unequal to the task; the means either cannot or will not accomplish the end, and the

whole affair is a *felo de se*; <sup>3</sup> for as the greater weight will always carry up the less, and as all the wheels of a machine are put in motion by one, it only remains to know which power in the constitution has the most weight, for that will govern; and though the others, or a part of them, may clog, or check the rapidity of its motion, yet so long as they cannot stop it, their endeavors will be ineffectual; the first moving power will at last have its way, and what it wants in speed is supplied by time.

That the crown is this overbearing part in the English constitution needs not be mentioned, and that it derives its whole consequence merely from being the giver of places and pensions is self-evident; wherefore, though we have been wise enough to shut and lock a door against absolute monarchy, we at the same time have been foolish enough to put the crown in possession of the key.

The prejudice of Englishmen in favor of their own government by king, lords, and commons, arises as <sup>20</sup> much or more from national pride than reason. Individuals are undoubtedly safer in England than in some other countries: but the *will* of the king is as much the *law* of the land in Britain as in France, with this difference, that instead of proceeding directly from his mouth, it is handed to the people under the formidable shape of an act of parliament. For the fate of Charles the First hath only made kings more subtle—not more just.

Wherefore, laying aside all national pride and <sup>30</sup> prejudice in favor of modes and forms, the plain truth is that *it is wholly to the constitution of the people, and not to the constitution of the government* that the crown is not as oppressive in England as in Turkey.

An inquiry into the *constitutional errors* in the English form of government is at this time highly necessary; for as we are never in a proper condition of doing justice to others while we continue under the influence of some leading partiality, so neither are <sup>40</sup> we capable of doing it to ourselves while we remain fettered by any obstinate prejudice. And as a man who is attached to a prostitute is unfitted to choose or judge of a wife, so any prepossession in favor of a rotten constitution of government will disable us from discerning a good one.

<sup>3</sup> Murderer of itself.

## II. Of Monarchy and Hereditary Succession

Mankind being originally equals in the order of creation, the equality could only be destroyed by some subsequent circumstance: the distinctions of rich and poor may in a great measure be accounted for, and that without having recourse to the harsh, ill-sounding names of oppression and avarice. Oppression is often the *consequence*, but seldom or never <sup>10</sup> the *means* of riches; and though avarice will preserve a man from being necessitously poor, it generally makes him too timorous to be wealthy.

But there is another and greater distinction for which no truly natural or religious reason can be assigned, and that is the distinction of men into *kings* and *subjects*. Male and female are the distinctions of nature, good and bad the distinctions of heaven; but how a race of men came into the world so exalted above the rest, and distinguished like some new species, is worth inquiring into, and whether they are the means of happiness or of misery to mankind.

In the early ages of the world, according to the Scripture chronology there were no kings; the consequence of which was there were no wars; it is the pride of kings which throws mankind into confusion. Holland without a king hath enjoyed more peace for this last century than any of the monarchical governments in Europe. Antiquity favors the same remark; for the quiet and rural lives of the first patriarchs have a happy something in them, which vanishes when we come to the history of Jewish royalty.

Government by kings was first introduced into the world by the heathens, from whom the children of Israel copied the custom. It was the most prosperous invention the Devil ever set on foot for the promotion of idolatry. The heathens paid divine honors to their deceased kings, and the Christian world has improved on the plan by doing the same to their living ones. How impious is the title of sacred Majesty applied to a worm, who in the midst of his splendor is crumbling into dust!

As the exalting one man so greatly above the rest cannot be justified on the equal rights of nature, so neither can it be defended on the authority of Scripture; for the will of the Almighty, as declared by Gideon <sup>4</sup> and the prophet Samuel, <sup>5</sup> expressly disapproves of government by kings. All anti-monarchi-

<sup>4</sup> See Judges 8:22-25.

<sup>5</sup> See I Samuel 8:5-22.

cal parts of Scripture have been very smoothly glossed over in monarchical governments, but they undoubtedly merit the attention of countries which have their governments yet to form. "*Render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's,*" is the scripture doctrine of courts, yet it is no support of monarchical government, for the Jews at that time were without a king, and in a state of vassalage to the Romans.

Near three thousand years passed away, from the Mosaic account of the creation, till the Jews under a national delusion requested a king. Till then their form of government (except in extraordinary cases where the Almighty interposed) was a kind of republic, administered by a judge and the elders of the tribes. Kings they had none, and it was held sinful to acknowledge any being under that title but the Lord of Hosts. And when a man seriously reflects on the idolatrous homage which is paid to the persons of kings, he need not wonder that the Almighty, ever jealous of his honor, should disapprove a form of government which so impiously invades the prerogative of heaven.

Monarchy is ranked in scripture as one of the sins of the Jews, for which a course in reserve is denounced against them. The history of that transaction is worth attending to.

The children of Israel being oppressed by the Midianites, Gideon marched against them with a small army, and victory through the Divine interposition decided in his favor. The Jews elate with success and attributing it to the generalship of Gideon, proposed making him a king, saying, *Rule thou over us, thou and thy son, and thy son's son.* Here was temptation in its fullest extent; not a kingdom only, but an hereditary one; but Gideon in the piety of his soul replied, *I will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you.* THE LORD SHALL RULE OVER YOU. Words need not be more explicit; Gideon doth not decline the honor, but denieth their right to give it; neither doth he compliment them with invented declarations of his thanks, but in the positive style of a prophet charges them with disaffection to their proper sovereign, the King of Heaven.

About one hundred and thirty years after this, they fell again into the same error. The hankering which the Jews had for the idolatrous customs of the heathens is something exceedingly unaccountable; but so it was that laying hold of the misconduct of

Samuel's two sons who were intrusted with some secular concerns, they came in an abrupt and clamorous manner to Samuel, saying, *Behold thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways, now make us a king to judge us like all the other nations.* And here we cannot but observe that their motives were bad, viz. that they might be like unto other nations, i.e. the heathens, whereas their true glory lay in being as much unlike them as possible. *But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, give us a king to judge us; and Samuel prayed unto the Lord, and the Lord said unto Samuel, hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee, for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, THAT I SHOULD NOT REIGN OVER THEM.* According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt even unto this day, wherewith they have forsaken me, and served other Gods: so do they also unto thee. Now therefore hearken unto their voice, howbeit, protest solemnly unto them and show them the manner of the king that shall reign over them, i.e. not of any particular king, but the general manner of the kings of the earth whom Israel was so eagerly copying after. And notwithstanding the great distance of time and difference of manners, the character is still in fashion. *And Samuel told all the words of the Lord unto the people, that asked of him a king. And he said, This shall be the manner of the king that shall reign over you. He will take your sons and appoint them for himself for his chariots and to be his horsemen, and some shall run before his chariots (this description agrees with the present mode of impressing men) and he will appoint him captains over thousands and captains over fifties, will set them to ear his ground and to reap his harvest, and to make his instruments of war, and instruments of his chariots. And he will take your daughters to be confectionaries, and to be cooks, and to be bakers (this describes the expence and luxury as well as the oppression of kings) and he will take your fields and your vineyards, and your olive yards, even the best of them, and give them to his servants. And he will take the tenth of your seed, and of your vineyards, and give them to his officers and to his servants (by which we see that bribery, corruption, and favoritism are the standing vices of kings) and he will take the tenth of your men servants, and your maid servants, and your goodliest young men, and your asses, and put them to his*

*work: and he will take the tenth of your sheep, and ye shall be his servants, and ye shall cry out in that day because of your king which ye shall have chosen, AND THE LORD WILL NOT HEAR YOU IN THAT DAY.*

This accounts for the continuation of monarchy; neither do the characters of the few good kings which have lived since, either sanctify the title, or blot out the sinfulness of the origin; the high encomium given of David <sup>6</sup> takes no notice of him *officially as a king*, but only as a *man* after God's own heart. *Nevertheless the People refused to obey the voice of Samuel, and they said, Nay but we will have a king over us, that we may be like all the nations, and that our king may judge us, and go out before us and fight our battles.* Samuel continued to reason with them, but to no purpose; he set before them their ingratitude, but all would not avail; and seeing them fully bent on their folly, he cried out, *I will call unto the Lord, and he shall send thunder and rain* (which was then a punishment, being in the time of wheat harvest) <sup>10</sup> *that ye may perceive and see that your wickedness is great which ye have done in the sight of the Lord, IN ASKING YOU A KING. So Samuel called unto the Lord, and the Lord sent thunder and rain that day, and all the people greatly feared the Lord and Samuel. And all the people said unto Samuel, Pray for thy servants unto the Lord thy God that we die not, for WE HAVE ADDED UNTO OUR SINS THIS EVIL, TO ASK A KING.* These portions of scripture are direct and positive. They admit of no equivocal construction. That <sup>30</sup> the Almighty hath here entered his protest against monarchical government is true, or the scripture is false. And a man hath good reason to believe that there is as much of kingcraft as priestcraft in withholding the scripture from the public in popish countries. For monarchy in every instance is the popery of government.

To the evil of monarchy we have added that of hereditary succession; and as the first is a degradation and lessening of ourselves, so the second, <sup>40</sup> claimed as a matter of right, is an insult and imposition on posterity. For all men being originally equals, no *one* by *birth* could have a right to set up his own family in perpetual preference to all others forever, and though himself might deserve *some* decent degree of honors of his contemporaries, yet his descendants might be far too unworthy to inherit them. One of the strongest *natural* proofs of the

folly of hereditary right in kings, is that nature disapproves it, otherwise she would not so frequently turn it into ridicule by giving mankind an *ass* for a *lion*.

Secondly, as no man at first could possess any other public honors than were bestowed upon him, so the givers of those honors could have no power to give away the right of posterity, and though they might say "we choose you for our head," they could not without manifest injustice to their children say "that your children and your children's children shall reign over our's forever." Because such an unwise, unjust, unnatural compact might (perhaps) in the next succession put them under the government of a rogue or a fool. Most wise men in their private sentiments have ever treated hereditary right with contempt; yet it is one of those evils which when once established is not easily removed; many submit from fear, others from superstition, and the more powerful part shares with the king the plunder of the rest.

This is supposing the present race of kings in the world to have had an honorable origin; whereas it is more than probable that, could we take off the dark covering of antiquity and trace them to their first rise, we should find the first of them nothing better than the principal ruffian of some restless gang, whose savage manners of pre-eminence in subtlety obtained him the title of chief among plunderers; and who by increasing in power, and extending his depredations, overawed the quiet and defenseless to purchase their safety by frequent contributions. Yet his electors could have no idea of giving hereditary right to his descendants, because such a perpetual exclusion of themselves was incompatible with the free and unrestrained principles they professed to live by. Wherefore, hereditary succession in the early ages of monarchy could not take place as a matter of claim, but as something casual or complemental; but as few or <sup>no</sup> records were extant in those days, and traditionary history stuffed with fables, it was very easy, after the lapse of a few generations, to trump up some superstitious tale conveniently timed, Mahomet-like,<sup>7</sup> to cram hereditary right down the throats of the vulgar. Perhaps the disorders which threatened, or seemed to threaten, on the decease of a leader and the choice of a new one (for elections among ruffians could not

<sup>6</sup> See I Kings 2:4.

<sup>7</sup> Paine suggests that Mohammed carefully timed for his political purposes the revelations upon which the Koran is based.



be very orderly) induced many at first to favor hereditary pretensions; by which means it happened, as it hath happened since, that what at first was submitted to as a convenience was afterwards claimed as a right.

England, since the conquest, hath known some few good monarchs, but groaned beneath a much larger number of bad ones; yet no man in his senses can say that their claim under William the Conqueror is a very honorable one. A French bastard, landing with an armed banditti and establishing himself king of England against the consent of the natives, is in plain terms a very paltry rascally original. It certainly hath no divinity in it. However it is needless to spend much time in exposing the folly of hereditary right; if there are any so weak as to believe it, let them promiscuously worship the Ass and the Lion, and welcome. I shall neither copy their humility, nor disturb their devotion.

Yet I should be glad to ask how they suppose kings came at first? The question admits but of three answers, viz., either by lot, by election, or by usurpation. If the first king was taken by lot, it establishes a precedent for the next, which excludes hereditary succession. Saul was by lot,<sup>8</sup> yet the succession was not hereditary, neither does it appear from that transaction that there was any intention it ever should be. If the first king of any country was by election that likewise establishes a precedent for the next; for to say that the right of all future generations is taken away by the act of the first electors in their choice not only of a king, but of a family of kings forever, hath no parallel in or out of scripture but the doctrine of original sin, which supposes the free will of all men lost in Adam; and from such comparison, and it will admit of no other, hereditary succession can derive no glory. For as in Adam all sinned, and as in the first electors all men obeyed; as in the one all mankind were subjected to Satan, and in the other to sovereignty; as our innocence was lost in the first, and our authority in the last; and as both disable us from reassuming some former state and privilege, it unanswerably follows that original sin and hereditary succession are parallels. Dishonorable rank! inglorious connection! yet the most subtle sophist cannot produce a juster simile.

As to usurpation, no man will be so hardy as to defend it; and that William the Conqueror was a

usurper is a fact not to be contradicted. The plain truth is, that the antiquity of English monarchy will not bear looking into.

But it is not so much the absurdity as the evil of hereditary succession which concerns mankind. Did it insure a race of good and wise men it would have the seal of divine authority, but as it opens a door to the *foolish*, the *wicked*, and the *improper*, it hath in it the nature of oppression. Men who look upon themselves born to reign, and others to obey, soon grow insolent. Selected from the rest of mankind, their minds are early poisoned by importance; and the world they act in differs so materially from the world at large that they have but little opportunity of knowing its true interest, and when they succeed to the government are frequently the most ignorant and unfit of any throughout the dominions.

Another evil which attends hereditary succession is, that the throne is subject to be possessed by a minor at any age; all which time the regency, acting under the cover of a king, have every opportunity and inducement to betray their trust. The same national misfortune happens when a king, worn out with age and infirmity, enters the last stage of human weakness. In both these cases the public becomes a prey to every miscreant who can temper successfully with the follies either of age or infancy.

The most plausible plea which hath ever been offered in favor of hereditary succession is that it preserves a nation from civil wars; and were this true, it would be weighty; whereas, it is the most barefaced falsity ever imposed upon mankind. The whole history of England disowns the fact. Thirty kings and two minors have reigned in that distracted kingdom since the conquest, in which time there have been (including the Revolution) no less than eight civil wars and nineteen rebellions. Wherefore instead of making for peace, it makes against it, and destroys the very foundation it seems to stand upon.

The contest for monarchy and succession between the houses of York and Lancaster<sup>9</sup> laid England in a scene of blood for many years. Twelve pitched battles, besides skirmishes and sieges, were fought between Henry and Edward. Twice was Henry prisoner to Edward, who in his turn was prisoner to Henry. And so uncertain is the fate of war and the

<sup>8</sup> See I Kings 10:17-24.

<sup>9</sup> York and Lancaster represent the two houses or factions that fought for the rule of England after the deposition of Richard II in 1399.

temper of a nation, when nothing but personal matters are the ground of a quarrel, that Henry was taken in triumph from a prison to a palace, and Edward obliged to fly from a palace to a foreign land; yet, as sudden transitions of temper are seldom lasting, Henry in his turn was driven from the throne, and Edward recalled to succeed him. The parliament always following the strongest side.

This contest began in the reign of Henry the Sixth, and was not entirely extinguished till Henry the Seventh, in whom the families were united. Including a period of sixty-seven years, viz., from 1422 to 1489.

In short, monarchy and succession have laid (not this or that kingdom only) but the world in blood and ashes. 'Tis a form of government which the word of God bears testimony against, and blood will attend it.

If we inquire into the business of a king, we shall find (in some countries they may have none) that after sauntering away their lives without pleasure to themselves or advantages to the nation, they withdraw from the scene, and leave their successors to tread the same idle round. In absolute monarchies the whole weight of business, civil and military, lies on the king; the children of Israel in their request for a king urged this plea, "that he may judge us, and go out before us and fight our battles." But in countries where he is neither a judge nor a general, as in England, a man would be puzzled to know what is his business.

The nearer any government approaches to a republic, the less business there is for a king. It is somewhat difficult to find a proper name for the government of England. Sir William Meredith<sup>10</sup> calls it a republic; but in its present state it is unworthy of the name, because the corrupt influence of the crown, by having all the places in its disposal, hath so effectually swallowed up the power, and eaten out the virtue of the House of Commons (the republican part in the constitution) that the government of England is nearly as monarchical as that of France or Spain. Men fall out with names without understanding them. For 'tis the republican and not the monarchical part of the constitution of England which Englishmen glory in, viz. the liberty of choosing a house of commons from out of their own

body—and it is easy to see that when republican virtues fail, slavery ensues. Why is the constitution of England sickly but because monarchy hath poisoned the republic, the crown has engrossed the commons?

In England a king hath little more to do than to make war and give away places; which in plain terms is to impoverish the nation and set it together by the ears. A pretty business indeed for a man to be allowed eight hundred thousand sterling a year for, and worshipped into the bargain! Of more worth is one honest man to society, and in the sight of God, than all the crowned ruffians that ever lived.

### III. Thoughts on the Present State of American Affairs

In the following pages I offer nothing more than simple facts, plain arguments, and common sense; and have no other preliminaries to settle with the reader, than that he will divest himself of prejudice and prepossession, and suffer his reason and his feelings to determine for themselves; that he will put on, or rather that he will not put off, the true character of a man, and generously enlarge his views beyond the present day.

Volumes have been written on the subject of the struggle between England and America. Men of all ranks have embarked in the controversy, from different motives, and with various designs; but all have been ineffectual, and the period of debate is closed. Arms as the last resource decide the contest; the appeal was the choice of the king, and the continent has accepted the challenge.

It hath been reported of the late Mr. Pelham<sup>11</sup> (who though an able minister was not without his faults) that on his being attacked in the House of Commons on the score that his measures were only of a temporary kind, replied, "*They will last my time.*" Should a thought so fatal and unmanly possess the colonies in the present contest, the name of ancestors will be remembered by future generations with detestation.

The sun never shined on a cause of greater worth. 'Tis not the affair of a city, a county, a province, or a kingdom; but of a continent—of at least one-eighth part of the habitable globe. 'Tis not the concern of a day, a year, or an age; posterity are virtually in-

<sup>10</sup> Sir William Meredith (1725?–1790), an English political leader.

<sup>11</sup> Henry Pelham (1695?–1754), Prime Minister of England (1744–1754).

volved in the contest, and will be more or less affected even to the end of time by the proceedings now. Now is the seedtime of continental union, faith, and honor. The least fracture now will be like a name engraved with the point of a pin on the tender rind of a young oak; the wound would enlarge with the tree, and posterity read it in full grown characters.

By referring the matter from argument to arms, a new era for politics is struck—a new method of thinking has arisen. All plans, proposals, &c. prior to the nineteenth of April,<sup>12</sup> i.e. to the commencement of hostilities, are like the almanacks of the last year; which though proper then, are superseded and useless now. Whatever was advanced by the advocates on either side of the question then, terminated in one and the same point, viz. a union with Great Britain; the only difference between the parties was the method of effecting it; the one proposing force, the other friendship; but it has so far happened that the first has failed, and the second has withdrawn her 20 influence.

As much has been said of the advantages of reconciliation, which, like an agreeable dream, has passed away and left us as we were, it is but right that we should examine the contrary side of the argument, and inquire into some of the many material injuries which these colonies sustain, and always will sustain, by being connected with and dependent on Great Britain. To examine that connection and dependence on the principles of nature and common sense; to see 30 what we have to trust to, if separated, and what we are to expect, if dependent.

I have heard it asserted by some, that as America has flourished under her former connection with Great Britain, the same connection is necessary towards her future happiness, and will always have the same effect. Nothing can be more fallacious than this kind of argument. We may as well assert that because a child has thrived upon milk, that it is never to have meat, or that the first twenty years of our lives is 40 to become a precedent for the next twenty. But even this is admitting more than is true; for I answer roundly that America would have flourished as much, and probably much more, had no European power taken any notice of her. The commerce by which she hath enriched herself are the necessaries of life, and will always have a market while eating is the custom of Europe.

<sup>12</sup> The date of the Battle of Lexington.

But she has protected us, say some. That she hath engrossed us is true, and defended the continent at our expense as well as her own is admitted; and she would have defended Turkey from the same motive, viz. for the sake of trade and dominion.

Alas! we have been long led away by ancient prejudices and made large sacrifices to superstition. We have boasted the protection of Great Britain without considering that her motive was *interest*, not *attachment*; and that she did not protect us from *our enemies on our account*, but from her enemies on her own account, from those who had no quarrel with us on any *other account*, and who will always be our enemies on the *same account*. Let Britain waive her pretensions to the continent, or the continent throw off the dependence, and we should be at peace with France and Spain were they at war with Britain. The miseries of Hanover's<sup>13</sup> last war ought to warn us against connections.

It hath lately been asserted in parliament, that the colonies have no relation to each other but through the parent country, i.e. that Pennsylvania and the Jerseys, and so on for the rest, are sister colonies by the way of England; this is certainly a very roundabout way of proving relationship, but it is the nearest and only true way of proving enmity (or enmityship, if I may so call it). France and Spain never were, nor perhaps ever will be, our enemies as *Americans*, but as our being the *subjects of Great Britain*.

But Britain is the parent country, say some. Then the more shame upon her conduct. Even brutes do not devour their young, nor savages make war upon their families; wherefore, the assertion, if true, turns to her reproach; but it happens not to be true, or only partly so, and the phrase *parent* or *mother country* hath been jesuitically adopted by the king and his parasites, with a low papistical design of gaining an unfair bias on the credulous weakness of our minds. Europe, and not England, is the parent country of America. This new world hath been the asylum for the persecuted lovers of civil and religious liberty from *every part* of Europe. Hither have they fled, not from the tender embraces of the mother, but from the cruelty of the monster; and it is so far true of England, that the same tyranny which drove the first emigrants from home pursues their descendants still.

<sup>13</sup> Hanover was the principal scene of the Seven Years' War (1756–1763), especially the campaigns of 1757.

In this extensive quarter of the globe, we forget the narrow limits of three hundred and sixty miles (the extent of England) and carry our friendship on a larger scale; we claim brotherhood with every European Christian, and triumph in the generosity of the sentiment.

It is pleasant to observe by what regular gradations we surmount the force of local prejudices as we enlarge our acquaintance with the world. A man born in any town in England divided into parishes, will naturally associate most with his fellow parishioners (because their interests in many cases will be common) and distinguish him by the name of *neighbor*; if he meet him but a few miles from home, he drops the narrow idea of a street, and salutes him by the name of *townsman*; if he travel out of the county and meet him in any other, he forgets the minor divisions of street and town, and calls him *country-man*, *i.e.* *county-man*; but if in their foreign excursions they should associate in France, or any other part of *Europe*, their local remembrance would be enlarged into that of *Englishman*. And by a just parity of reasoning, all Europeans meeting in America, or any other quarter of the globe, are *countrymen*; for England, Holland, Germany, or Sweden, when compared with the whole, stand in the same places on the larger scale, which the divisions of street, town, and county do on the smaller ones; distinctions too limited for continental minds. Not one third of the inhabitants, even of this province, are of English descent. Wherefore, I reprobate the phrase of parent or mother country applied to England only, as being false, selfish, narrow, and ungenerous.

But, admitting that we were all of English descent, what does it amount to? Nothing. Britain, being now an open enemy, extinguishes every other name and title; and to say that reconciliation is our duty, is truly farcical. The first king of England, of the present line (William the Conqueror) was a Frenchman, and half the peers of England are descendants from the same country; wherefore, by the same method of reasoning, England ought to be governed by France.

Much hath been said of the united strength of Britain and the colonies, that in conjunction they might bid defiance to the world. But this is mere presumption, the fate of war is uncertain; neither do the expressions mean anything, for this continent would never suffer itself to be drained of inhabitants

to support the British arms in either Asia, Africa, or Europe.

Besides, what have we to do with setting the world at defiance? Our plan is commerce, and that, well attended to, will secure us the peace and friendship of all Europe; because it is the interest of all Europe to have America a *free port*. Her trade will always be a protection, and her barrenness of gold and silver secure her from invaders.

I challenge the warmest advocate for reconciliation to show a single advantage that this continent can reap, by being connected with Great Britain. I repeat the challenge, not a single advantage is derived. Our corn will fetch its price in any market in Europe, and our imported goods must be paid for, buy them where we will.

But the injuries and disadvantages which we sustain by that connection are without number; and our duty to mankind at large, as well as to ourselves, instruct us to renounce the alliance: because any submission to, or dependence on, Great Britain, tends directly to involve this continent in European wars and quarrels, and set us at variance with nations who would otherwise seek our friendship, and against whom we have neither anger nor complaint. As Europe is our market for trade, we ought to form no partial connection with any part of it. 'Tis the true interest of America to steer clear of European contentions, which she never can do while by her dependence on Britain she is made the makeweight in the scale of British politics.

Europe is too thickly planted with kingdoms to be long at peace, and whenever a war breaks out between England and any foreign power, the trade of America goes to ruin, *because of her connection with Britain*. The next war may not turn out like the last, and should it not, the advocates for reconciliation now will be wishing for separation then, because neutrality in that case would be a safer convoy than a man of war. Everything that is right or reasonable pleads for separation. The blood of the slain, the weeping voice of nature cries, 'TIS TIME TO PART. Even the distance at which the Almighty hath placed England and America is a strong and natural proof that the authority of the one over the other, was never the design of heaven. 'The time likewise at which the continent was discovered, adds weight to the argument, and the manner in which it was peopled, increases the force of it. The Reformation was pre-

ceded by the discovery of America, as if the Almighty graciously meant to open a sanctuary to the persecuted in future years, when home should afford neither friendship nor safety.

The authority of Great Britain over this continent is a form of government which sooner or later must have an end. And a serious mind can draw no true pleasure by looking forward, under the painful and positive conviction that what he calls "the present constitution" is merely temporary. As parents, we can have no joy, knowing that *this government* is not sufficiently lasting to insure anything which we may bequeath to posterity; and by a plain method of argument, as we are running the next generation into debt, we ought to do the work of it, otherwise we use them meanly and pitifully. In order to discover the line of our duty rightly, we should take our children in our hand, and fix our station a few years farther into life; that eminence will present a prospect which a few present fears and prejudices conceal 20 from our sight.

Though I would carefully avoid giving unnecessary offense, yet I am inclined to believe that all those who espouse the doctrine of reconciliation may be included within the following descriptions: Interested men, who are not to be trusted, weak men who *cannot* see, prejudiced men who *will not* see, and a certain set of moderate men who think better of the European world than it deserves; and this last class, by an ill-judged deliberation, will be the cause of 30 more calamities to this continent than all the other three.

It is the good fortune of many to live distant from the scene of present sorrow; the evil is not sufficiently brought to *their* doors to make *them* feel the precariousness with which all American property is possessed. But let our imaginations transport us a few moments to Boston;<sup>14</sup> that seat of wretchedness will teach us wisdom, and instruct us forever to renounce a power in whom we can have no trust. The 40 inhabitants of that unfortunate city, who but a few months ago were in ease and affluence, have now no other alternative than to stay and starve, or turn out to beg. Endangered by the fire of their friends if they continue within the city, and plundered by the soldiery if they leave it, in their present situation they are prisoners without the hope of redemption, and in

<sup>14</sup> Besieged from July, 1775, until March, 1776.

a general attack for their relief they would be exposed to the fury of both armies.

Men of passive tempers look somewhat lightly over the offenses of Great Britain, and, still hoping for the best, are apt to call out, *Come, come, we shall be friends again for all this*. But examine the passions and feelings of mankind; bring the doctrine of reconciliation to the touchstone of nature, and then tell me whether you can hereafter love, honor, and faithfully serve the power that hath carried fire and sword into your land? If you cannot do all these, then are you only deceiving yourselves, and by your delay bringing ruin upon posterity. Your future connection with Britain, whom you can neither love nor honor, will be forced and unnatural, and being formed only on the plan of present convenience, will in a little time fall into a relapse more wretched than the first. But if you say you can still pass the violations over, then I ask, Hath your house been burnt? Hath your property been destroyed before your face? Are your wife and children destitute of a bed to lie on, or bread to live on? Have you lost a parent or child by their hands, and yourself the ruined and wretched survivor? If you have not, then are you not a judge of those who have. But if you have, and can still shake hands with the murderers, then are you unworthy the name of husband, father, friend, or lover; and whatever may be your rank or title in life, you have the heart of a coward, and the spirit of a sycophant.

This is not inflaming or exaggerating matters, but trying them by those feelings and affections which nature justifies, and without which we should be incapable of discharging the social duties of life, or enjoying the felicities of it. I mean not to exhibit horror for the purpose of provoking revenge, but to awaken us from fatal and unmanly slumbers, that we may pursue determinately some fixed object. 'Tis not in the power of Britain or of Europe to conquer America, if she doth not conquer herself by *delay* and 50 *timidity*. The present winter is worth an age if rightly employed, but if lost or neglected the whole continent will partake of the misfortune; and there is no punishment which that man doth not deserve, be he who, or what, or where he will, that may be the means of sacrificing a season so precious and useful.

It is repugnant to reason, to the universal order of things, to all examples from former ages, to suppose

that this continent can long remain subject to any external power. The most sanguine in Britain doth not think so. The utmost stretch of human wisdom cannot, at this time, compass a plan, short of separation, which can promise the continent even a year's security. Reconciliation is *now* a fallacious dream. Nature has deserted the connection, and art cannot supply her place. For, as Milton wisely expresses, "Never can true reconcilment grow where wounds of deadly hate have pierced so deep."<sup>15</sup>

Every quiet method for peace hath been ineffectual. Our prayers have been rejected with disdain; and have tended to convince us that nothing flatters vanity or confirms obstinacy in kings more than repeated petitioning—and nothing hath contributed more than that very measure to make the kings of Europe absolute. Witness Denmark and Sweden.<sup>16</sup> Wherefore, since nothing but blows will do, for God's sake let us come to a final separation, and not leave the next generation to be cutting throats under the violated unmeaning names of parent and child.

To say they will never attempt it again is idle and visionary; we thought so at the repeal of the stamp act, yet a year or two undeceived us; as well may we suppose that nations which have been once defeated will never renew the quarrel.

As to government matters, it is not in the power of Britain to do this continent justice: the business of it will soon be too weighty and intricate to be managed with any tolerable degree of convenience, by a power so distant from us, and so very ignorant of us; for if they cannot conquer us they cannot govern us. To be always running three or four thousand miles with a tale or a petition, waiting four or five months for an answer, which, when obtained, requires five or six more to explain it in, will in a few years be looked upon as folly and childishness. There was a time when it was proper, and there is a proper time for it to cease.

Small islands not capable of protecting themselves are the proper objects for government to take under their care; but there is something absurd in supposing a continent to be perpetually governed by an island. In no instance hath nature made the satellite larger than its primary planet; and as England and America,

<sup>15</sup> *Paradise Lost*, IV, 98–9.

<sup>16</sup> Quarrels among the nobility had led to the establishment of a monarchy in Denmark under Frederick III in 1660 and in Sweden under Gustavus in 1772.

with respect to each other, reverse the common order of nature, it is evident that they belong to different systems. England to Europe: America to itself.

I am not induced by motives of pride, party, or resentment to espouse the doctrine of separation and independence; I am clearly, positively, and conscientiously persuaded that 'tis the true interest of this continent to be so; that everything short of *that* is mere patchwork, that it can afford no lasting felicity—that it is leaving the sword to our children, and shrinking back at a time when a little more, a little further, would have rendered this continent the glory of the earth.

As Britain hath not manifested the least inclination towards a compromise, we may be assured that no terms can be obtained worthy the acceptance of the continent, or any ways equal to the expense of blood and treasure we have been already put to.

The object contended for ought always to bear some just proportion to the expense. The removal of North<sup>17</sup> or the whole detestable junto,<sup>18</sup> is a matter unworthy the millions we have expended. A temporary stoppage of trade was an inconvenience which would have sufficiently balanced the repeal of all the acts complained of, had such repeals been obtained; but if the whole continent must take up arms, if every man must be a soldier, 'tis scarcely worth our while to fight against a contemptible ministry only. Dearly, dearly do we pay for the repeal of the acts, if that is all we fight for; for, in a just estimation, 'tis as great a folly to pay a Bunker-hill price<sup>19</sup> for law as for land. As I have always considered the independency of this continent an event which sooner or later must arrive, so from the late rapid progress of the continent to maturity, the event cannot be far off. Wherefore, on the breaking out of hostilities, it was not worth the while to have disputed a matter which time would have finally redressed, unless we meant to be in earnest; otherwise it is like wasting an estate on a suit at law, to regulate the trespasses of a tenant whose lease is just expiring. No man was a warmer wisher for a reconciliation than myself, before the fatal nineteenth of April, 1775,<sup>20</sup> but the

<sup>17</sup> Lord North was held responsible by the Colonists for the British policy of taxation, *i.e.*, for the principle rather than the burden of taxation.

<sup>18</sup> That is, an intriguing political group or faction.

<sup>19</sup> Nearly one-third of the troops engaged in the battle were killed or wounded.

<sup>20</sup> That is, the date of the British march on Concord.

moment the event of that day was made known, I rejected the hardened, sullen-tempered Pharaoh of England<sup>21</sup> forever; and disdain the wretch, that with the pretended title of FATHER OF HIS PEOPLE can unfeelingly hear of their slaughter, and composedly sleep with their blood upon his soul.

But admitting that matters were now made up, what would be the event? I answer, the ruin of the continent. And that for several reasons.

*First.* The powers of governing still remaining in the hands of the king, he will have a negative over the whole legislation of this continent. And as he hath shown himself such an inveterate enemy to liberty, and discovered such a thirst for arbitrary power, is he, or is he not, a proper person to say to these colonies, *You shall make no laws but what I please!* And is there any inhabitant of America so ignorant as not to know, that according to what is called the *present constitution*, this continent can make no laws but what the king gives leave to; and is there any man so unwise as not to see, that (considering what has happened) he will suffer no law to be made here but such as suits *his* purpose? We may be as effectually enslaved by the want of laws in America, as by submitting to laws made for us in England. After matters are made up (as it is called), can there be any doubt but the whole power of the crown will be exerted to keep this continent as low and humble as possible? Instead of going forward we shall go backward, or be perpetually quarrelling, or ridiculously petitioning. We are already greater than the king wishes us to be, and will he not hereafter endeavor to make us less? To bring the matter to one point, Is the power who is jealous of our prosperity, a proper power to govern us? Whoever says No to this question is an independent, for independency means no more than this, whether we shall make our own laws, or whether the king, the greatest enemy this continent hath, or can have, shall tell us, *There shall be no laws but such as I like.*

But the king, you'll say, has a negative in England; the people there can make no laws without his consent. In point of right and good order, it is something very ridiculous that a youth of twenty-one (which hath often happened) shall say to several millions of people older and wiser than himself, "I forbid this or that act of yours to be law." But in this place I decline this sort of reply, though I will never cease

<sup>21</sup> George III.

to expose the absurdity of it, and only answer that England being the king's residence, and America not so, makes quite another case. The king's negative here is ten times more dangerous and fatal than it can be in England; for *there* he will scarcely refuse his consent to a bill for putting England into as strong a state of defense as possible, and in America he would never suffer such a bill to be passed.

America is only a secondary object in the system of British politics, England consults the good of *this* country no further than it answers her *own* purpose. Wherefore, her own interest leads her to suppress the growth of *ours* in every case which doth not promote *her* advantage, or in the least interfere with it. A pretty state we should soon be in under such a secondhand government, considering what has happened! Men do not change from enemies to friends by the alteration of a name: and in order to show that reconciliation *now* is a dangerous doctrine, I affirm *that it would be policy in the king at this time to repeal the acts for the sake of reinstating himself in the government of the provinces*; in order that HE MAY ACCOMPLISH BY CRAFT AND SUBTLETY, IN THE LONG RUN, WHAT HE CANNOT DO BY FORCE AND VIOLENCE IN THE SHORT ONE. Reconciliation and ruin are nearly related.

*Secondly.* That as even the best terms which we can expect to obtain can amount to no more than a temporary expedient, or a kind of government by guardianship, which can last no longer than till the colonies come of age, so the general face and state of things in the interim will be unsettled and unpromising. Emigrants of property will not choose to come to a country whose form of government hangs but by a thread, and who is every day tottering on the brink of commotion and disturbance; and numbers of the present inhabitants would lay hold of the interval to dispose of their effects, and quit the continent.

But the most powerful of all arguments is, that nothing but independence, i.e. a continental form of government, can keep the peace of the continent and preserve it inviolate from civil wars. I dread the event of a reconciliation with Britain *now*, as it is more than probable that it will be followed by a revolt somewhere or other, the consequences of which may be far more fatal than all the malice of Britain.

Thousands are already ruined by British barbarity; (thousands more will probably suffer the same fate).

Those men have other feelings than us who have nothing suffered. All they *now* possess is liberty; what they before enjoyed is sacrificed to its service, and having nothing more to lose they disdain submission. Besides, the general temper of the colonies towards a British government will be like that of a youth who is nearly out of his time; they will care very little about her. And a government which cannot preserve the peace is no government at all, and in that case we pay our money for nothing; and pray 10 what is it that Britain can do, whose power will be wholly on paper, should a civil tumult break out the very day after reconciliation? I have heard some men say, many of whom I believe spoke without thinking, that they dreaded an independence, fearing that it would produce civil wars. It is but seldom that our first thoughts are truly correct, and that is the case here; for there is ten times more to dread from a patched up connection than from independence. I make the sufferer's case my own, and I protest, that 20 were I driven from house and home, my property destroyed, and my circumstances ruined, that as a man, sensible of injuries, I could never relish the doctrine of reconciliation, or consider myself bound thereby.

The colonies have manifested such a spirit of good order and obedience to continental government as is sufficient to make every reasonable person easy and happy on that head. No man can assign the least pretense for his fears on any other grounds than such 30 as are truly childish and ridiculous, viz., that one colony will be striving for superiority over another.

Where there are no distinctions there can be no superiority; perfect equality affords no temptation. The republics of Europe are all (and we may say always) in peace. Holland and Switzerland<sup>22</sup> are without wars, foreign or domestic. Monarchical governments, it is true, are never long at rest: the crown itself is a temptation to enterprising ruffians at *home*; and that degree of pride and insolence ever attendant 40 on regal authority, swells into a rupture with foreign powers in instances where a republican government, by being formed on more natural principles, would negotiate the mistake.

If there is any true cause of fear respecting independence, it is because no plan is yet laid down.

<sup>22</sup> Holland (the United Netherlands) remained a republic until 1814. Both Holland and Switzerland were often named as examples of countries thriving under republican forms of government.

Men do not see their way out. Wherefore, as an opening into that business I offer the following hints; at the same time modestly affirming that I have no other opinion of them myself than that they may be the means of giving rise to something better. Could the straggling thoughts of individuals be collected, they would frequently form materials for wise and able men to improve into useful matter.

Let the assemblies be annual, with a president only. The representation more equal, their business wholly domestic, and subject to the authority of a continental congress.

Let each colony be divided into six, eight, or ten, convenient districts, each district to send a proper number of delegates to congress, so that each colony send at least thirty. The whole number in congress will be at least 390. Each congress to sit and to choose a president by the following method. When the delegates are met, let a colony be taken from the whole thirteen colonies by lot, after which let the congress choose (by ballot) a president from out of the delegates of that province. In the next congress, let a colony be taken by lot from twelve only, omitting that colony from which the president was taken in the former congress, and so proceeding on till the whole thirteen shall have had their proper rotation. And in order that nothing may pass into a law but what is satisfactorily just, not less than three fifths of the congress to be called a majority. He that will promote discord, under a government so equally formed as this, would have joined Lucifer in his revolt.

But as there is a peculiar delicacy from whom, or in what manner, this business must first arise, and as it seems most agreeable and consistent that it should come from some intermediate body between the governed and the governors, that is, between the congress and the people, let a CONTINENTAL CONFERENCE be held in the following manner, and for the following purpose:

A committee of twenty-six members of congress, viz., two for each colony. Two members from each house of assembly, or provincial convention; and five representatives of the people at large, to be chosen in the capital city or town of each province, for, and in behalf of the whole province, by as many qualified voters as shall think proper to attend from all parts of the province for that purpose; or, if more convenient, the representatives may be chosen in two or



three of the most populous parts thereof. In this CONFERENCE, thus assembled, will be united the two grand principles of business, *knowledge* and *power*. The members of congress, assemblies, or conventions, by having had experience in national concerns, will be able and useful counsellors, and the whole, being empowered by the people, will have a truly legal authority.

The conferring members being met, let their business be to frame a CONTINENTAL CHARTER, or Charter of the United Colonies (answering to what is called the Magna Charta of England); fixing the number and manner of choosing members of congress, members of assembly, with their date of sitting, and drawing the line of business and jurisdiction between them (always remembering, that our strength is continental, not provincial); securing freedom and property to all men, and above all things the free exercise of religion, according to the dictates of conscience; with such other matter as it is necessary for a charter to contain. Immediately after which, the said conference to dissolve, and the bodies which shall be chosen conformable to the said charter, to be the legislators and governors of this continent for the time being: Whose peace and happiness, may God preserve. AMEN.

Should any body of men be hereafter delegated for this or some similar purpose, I offer them the following extracts from that wise observer on governments, Dragonetti. "The science," says he, "of the politician consists in fixing the true point of happiness and freedom. Those men would deserve the gratitude of ages, who should discover a mode of government that contained the greatest sum of individual happiness, with the least national expense." \*

But where, say some, is the king of America? I'll tell you, friend, he reigns above, and doth not make havoc of mankind like the Royal Brute of Great Britain. Yet that we may not appear to be defective even in earthly honors, let a day be solemnly set apart for proclaiming the charter; let it be brought forth placed on the divine law, the Word of God; let a crown be placed thereon, by which the world may know, that so far as we approve of monarchy, that in America THE LAW IS KING. For as in absolute governments the king is law, so in free countries the law *ought* to BE

king, and there ought to be no other. But lest any ill use should afterwards arise, let the crown at the conclusion of the ceremony be demolished, and scattered among the people whose right it is.

A government of our own is our natural right; and when a man seriously reflects on the precariousness of human affairs, he will become convinced, that it is infinitely wiser and safer to form a constitution of our own in a cool deliberate manner, while we have it in our power, than to trust such an interesting event to time and chance. If we omit it now, some Massanello \* may hereafter arise, who, laying hold of popular disquietudes, may collect together the desperate and the discontented, and by assuming to themselves the powers of government, finally sweep away the liberties of the continent like a deluge. Should the government of America return again into the hands of Britain, the tottering situation of things will be a temptation for some desperate adventurer to try his fortune; and in such a case, what relief can Britain give? Ere she could hear the news, the fatal business might be done; and ourselves suffering like the wretched Britons under the oppression of the conqueror. Ye that oppose independence now, ye know not what ye do; ye are opening a door to eternal tyranny by keeping vacant the seat of government. There are thousands and tens of thousands who would think it glorious to expel from the continent that barbarous and hellish power which hath stirred up the Indians and the Negroes to destroy us; the cruelty hath a double guilt, it is dealing brutally by us, and treacherously by them.

To talk of friendship with those in whom our reason forbids us to have faith, and our affections wounded through a thousand pores instruct us to detest, is madness and folly. Every day wears out the little remains of kindred between us and them; and can there be any reason to hope that as the relationship expires the affection will increase, or that we shall agree better when we have ten times more and greater concerns to quarrel over than ever?

Ye that tell us of harmony and reconciliation, can ye restore to us the time that is past? Can ye give to prostitution its former innocence? Neither can ye reconcile Britain and America. The last cord now is

\* Dragonetti on "Virtues and Rewards." [Giacinto Dragonetti (1738-1818), author of *Le Virtù ed i Premi* (1767).]

\* Thomas Anello, otherwise Massanello, a fisherman of Naples, who after spiriting up his countrymen in the public market place, against the oppression of the Spaniards, to whom the place was then subject, prompted them to revolt, and in the space of a day became king.

broken, the people of England are presenting addresses against us. There are injuries which nature cannot forgive; she would cease to be nature if she did. As well can the lover forgive the ravisher of his mistress, as the continent forgive the murders of Britain. The Almighty hath implanted in us these inextinguishable feelings for good and wise purposes. They are the guardians of his image in our hearts. They distinguish us from the herd of common animals. The social compact would dissolve, and justice 10 should be extirpated from the earth, or have only a casual existence, were we callous to the touches of affection. The robber and the murderer would often escape unpunished, did not the injuries which our tempers sustain, provoke us into justice.

O ye that love mankind! Ye that dare oppose not only the tyranny but the tyrant, stand forth! Every spot of the old world is overrun with oppression. Freedom hath been hunted round the globe. Asia and Africa have long expelled her. Europe regards her like 20 a stranger, and England hath given her warning to depart. O receive the fugitive, and prepare in time an asylum for mankind.

#### IV. Of the Present Ability of America, with Some Miscellaneous Reflections

I have never met a man either in England or America who hath not confessed his opinion that a separation between the countries would take place, one time or other. And there is no instance in which 30 we have shown less judgment than in endeavoring to describe what we call the ripeness or fitness of the continent for independence.

As all men allow the measure, and vary only in their opinion of the time, let us, in order to remove mistakes, take a general survey of things, and endeavor if possible to find out the very time. But I need not go far, the inquiry ceases at once, for the *time hath found us*. The general concurrence, the glorious union of all things, proves the fact. 40

It is not in numbers but in unity that our great strength lies; yet our present numbers are sufficient to repel the force of all the world. The continent has at this time the largest body of armed and disciplined men of any power under heaven; and is just arrived at that pitch of strength, in which no single colony is able to support itself, and the whole, when united, is able to do anything. Our land force is more than sufficient, and as to naval affairs, we cannot be insensible

that Britain would never suffer an American man of war to be built while the continent remained in her hands. Wherefore, we should be no forwarder a hundred years hence in that branch than we are now; but the truth is, we should be less so, because the timber of the country is every day diminishing.

Were the continent crowded with inhabitants, her sufferings under the present circumstances would be intolerable. The more seaport-towns we had, the more 10 should we have both to defend and to lose. Our present numbers are so happily proportioned to our wants that no man need be idle. The diminution of trade affords an army, and the necessities of an army create a new trade.

Debts we have none; and whatever we may contract on this account will serve as a glorious memento of our virtue. Can we but leave posterity with a settled form of government, an independent constitution of its own, the purchase at any price will be 20 cheap. But to expend millions for the sake of getting a few vile acts repealed, and routing the present ministry only, is unworthy the charge, and is using posterity with the utmost cruelty; because it is leaving them the great work to do, and a debt upon their backs from which they derive no advantage. Such a thought is unworthy a man of honor, and is the true characteristic of a narrow heart and a piddling politician.

The debt we may contract doth not deserve our regard, if the work be but accomplished. No nation ought to be without a debt. A national debt is a national bond; and when it bears no interest, it is in no case a grievance. Britain is oppressed with a debt of upwards of one hundred and forty millions sterling, for which she pays upwards of four millions interest. And as a compensation for her debt, she has a large navy. America is without a debt, and without a navy; yet for a twentieth part of the English national debt, could have a navy as large again. The navy of England 40 is not worth at this time more than three million and a half sterling.

No country on the globe is so happily situated, or so internally capable of raising a fleet as America. Tar, timber, iron, and cordage are her natural produce. We need go abroad for nothing. Whereas the Dutch, who make large profits by hiring out their ships of war to the Spaniards and Portuguese, are obliged to import most of the materials they use. We ought to view the building a fleet as an article of

commerce, it being the natural manufacture of this country. It is the best money we can lay out. A navy when finished is worth more than it cost and is that nice point in national policy in which commerce and protection are united. Let us build; if we want them not, we can sell; and by that means replace our paper currency with ready gold and silver.

In point of manning a fleet, people in general run into great errors; it is not necessary that one-fourth part should be sailors. The Terrible privateer, Captain 10 Death,<sup>23</sup> stood the hottest engagement of any ship last war, yet had not twenty sailors on board, though her complement of men was upwards of two hundred. A few able and social sailors will soon instruct a sufficient number of active landsmen in the common work of a ship. Wherefore we never can be more capable of beginning on maritime matters than now, while our timber is standing, our fisheries blocked up, and our sailors and shipwrights out of employ. Men of war of seventy and eighty guns were built forty 20 years ago in New England, and why not the same now? Shipbuilding is America's greatest pride, and in which she will, in time, excel the whole world. The great empires of the east are mostly inland and consequently excluded from the possibility of rivalling her. Africa is in a state of barbarism; and no power in Europe hath either such an extent of coast or such an internal supply of materials. Where nature hath given the one, she hath withheld the other; to America only hath she been liberal of both. The vast 30 empire of Russia is almost shut out from the sea; wherefore her boundless forests, her tar, iron, and cordage are only articles of commerce.

In point of safety, ought we to be without a fleet? We are not the little people now which we were sixty years ago; at that time we might have trusted our property in the streets, or fields rather, and slept securely without locks or bolts to our doors and windows. The case is now altered, and our methods of defense ought to improve with our increase of 40 property. A common pirate, twelve months ago, might have come up the Delaware and laid the city of Philadelphia under contribution for what sum he pleased; and the same might have happened to other places. Nay, any daring fellow in a brig of 14 or 16 guns might have robbed the whole continent, and

carried off half a million of money. These are circumstances which demand our attention, and point out the necessity of naval protection.

Some perhaps will say that after we have made it up with Britain, she will protect us. Can they be so unwise as to mean that she will keep a navy in our harbors for that purpose? Common sense will tell us that the power which hath endeavored to subdue us is, of all others, the most improper to defend us. Conquest may be effected under the pretense of friendship; and ourselves, after a long and brave resistance, be at last cheated into slavery. And if her ships are not to be admitted into our harbors, I would ask, how is she to protect us? A navy three or four thousand miles off can be of little use, and on sudden emergencies, none at all. Wherefore if we must hereafter protect ourselves, why not do it for ourselves? Why do it for another?

The English list of ships of war is long and formidable, but not a tenth part of them are at any one time fit for service, numbers of them are not in being; yet their names are pompously continued in the list, if only a plank be left of the ship: and not a fifth part of such as are fit for service can be spared on any one station at one time. The East and West Indies, Mediterranean, Africa, and other parts over which Britain extends her claim, make large demands upon her navy. From a mixture of prejudice and inattention, we have contracted a false notion respecting the navy of England, and have talked as if we should have the whole of it to encounter at once, and for that reason supposed that we must have one as large; which not being instantly practicable, has been made use of by a set of disguised Tories to discourage our beginning thereon. Nothing can be further from truth than this; for if America had only a twentieth part of the naval force of Britain, she would be by far an overmatch for her; because, as we neither have nor claim any foreign dominion, our whole force would be employed on our own coast, where we should in the long run have two to one the advantage of those who had three or four thousand miles to sail over before they could attack us, and the same distance to return in order to refit and recruit. And although Britain, by her fleet, hath a check over our trade to Europe, we have as large a one over her trade to the West Indies which, by lying in the neighborhood of the continent, lies entirely at its mercy.

Some method might be fallen on to keep up a

<sup>23</sup> Captain Death, commander of the *Terrible*, a British privateer captured by the French on December 28, 1756, after a terrific battle.

naval force in time of peace, if we should not judge it necessary to support a constant navy. If premiums were to be given to merchants to build and employ in their service ships mounted with twenty, thirty, forty, or fifty guns (the premiums to be in proportion to the loss of bulk to the merchant), fifty or sixty of those ships, with a few guardships on constant duty, would keep up a sufficient navy, and that without burdening ourselves with the evil so loudly complained of in England of suffering their fleet in time of peace to lie rotting in the docks. To unite the sinews of commerce and defense is sound policy; for when our strength and our riches play into each other's hands, we need fear no external enemy.

In almost every article of defense we abound. Hemp flourishes even to rankness, so that we need not want cordage. Our iron is superior to that of other countries. Our small arms equal to any in the world. Cannon we can cast at pleasure. Saltpeter and gunpowder we are every day producing. Our knowledge is hourly improving. Resolution is our inherent character, and courage has never yet forsaken us. Wherefore, what is it that we want? Why is it that we hesitate? From Britain we can expect nothing but ruin. If she is once admitted to the government of America again, this continent will not be worth living in. Jealousies will be always arising; insurrections will be constantly happening; and who will go forth to quell them? Who will venture his life to reduce his own countrymen to a foreign obedience? The difference between Pennsylvania and Connecticut, respecting some unlocated lands, shows the insignificance of a British government, and fully proves that nothing but continental authority can regulate continental matters.

Another reason why the present time is preferable to all others is that the fewer our numbers are, the more land there is yet unoccupied which, instead of being lavished by the king on his worthless dependents, may be hereafter supplied not only to the discharge of the present debt but to the constant support of government. No nation under heaven hath such an advantage as this.

The infant state of the colonies, as it is called, so far from being against, is an argument in favor of independence. We are sufficiently numerous, and were we more so we might be less united. It is a matter worthy of observation that the more a country is peopled the smaller their armies are. In military

numbers, the ancients far exceeded the moderns; and the reason is evident, for trade being the consequence of population men became too much absorbed thereby to attend to anything else. Commerce diminishes the spirit both of patriotism and military defense. And history sufficiently informs us that the bravest achievements were always accomplished in the nonage of a nation. With the increase of commerce England hath lost its spirit. The city of London, notwithstanding its numbers, submits to continued insults with the patience of a coward. The more men have to lose, the less willing are they to venture. The rich are in general slaves to fear, and submit to courtly power with the trembling duplicity of a spaniel.

Youth is the seedtime of good habits, as well in nations as in individuals. It might be difficult, if not impossible, to form the continent into one government half a century hence. The vast variety of interests, occasioned by an increase of trade and population, would create confusion. Colony would be against colony. Each, being able, would scorn each other's assistance; and while the proud and foolish gloried in their little distinctions, the wise would lament that the union had not been formed before. Wherefore the present time is the true time for establishing it. The intimacy which is contracted in infancy and the friendship which is formed in misfortune are of all others the most lasting and unalterable. Our present union is marked with both these characters; we are young, and we have been distressed; but our concord hath withstood our troubles, and fixes a memorable era for posterity to glory in.

The present time, likewise, is that peculiar time which never happens to a nation but once, viz. the time of forming itself into a government. Most nations have let slip the opportunity, and by that means have been compelled to receive laws from their conquerors instead of making laws for themselves. First they had a king, and then a form of government; whereas the articles or charter of government should be formed first, and men delegated to execute them afterwards: but from the errors of other nations let us learn wisdom and lay hold of the present opportunity—to begin government at the right end.

When William the Conqueror subdued England, he gave them law at the point of the sword; and until we consent that the seat of government in America be legally and authoritatively occupied, we shall be

in danger of having it filled by some fortunate ruffian who may treat us in the same manner, and then where will be our freedom? where our property?

As to religion, I hold it to be the indispensable duty of government to protect all conscientious professors thereof, and I know of no other business which government has to do therewith. Let a man throw aside that narrowness of soul, that selfishness of principle, which the niggards of all professions are so unwilling to part with, and he will be at once delivered of his fears on that head. Suspicion is the companion of mean souls and the bane of all good society. For myself, I fully and conscientiously believe that it is the will of the Almighty that there should be a diversity of religious opinions among us. It affords a larger field for your Christian kindness. Were we all of one way of thinking, our religious dispositions would want matter for probation; and on this liberal principle I look on the various denominations among us to be like children of the same family, differing only in what is called their Christian names.

In pages [173-4] I threw out a few thoughts on the propriety of a continental charter (for I only presume to offer hints, not plans) and in this place I take the liberty of re-mentioning the subject by observing that a charter is to be understood as a bond of solemn obligation, which the whole enters into, to support the right of every separate part, whether of religion, professional freedom, or property. A right reckoning makes long friends.

I have heretofore, likewise, mentioned the necessity of a large and equal representation: and there is no political matter which more deserves our attention. A small number of electors, or a small number of representatives, are equally dangerous. But if the number of the representatives be not only small, but unequal, the danger is increased. As an instance of this I mention the following; when the petition of the associates was before the house of assembly of Pennsylvania, twenty-eight members only were present; all the Bucks county members, being eight, voted against it, and had seven of the Chester members done the same, this whole province had been governed by two counties only; and this danger it is always exposed to. The unwarrantable stretch, likewise, which the house made in their last sitting to gain an undue authority over the delegates of that province, ought to warn the people at large, how they trust power out of their hands. A set of in-

structions for their delegates were put together, which in point of sense and business would have dishonored a schoolboy, and after being approved by a few, a very few, without doors, were carried into the house, and there passed in behalf of the whole colony; whereas, did the whole colony know with what ill-will that house had entered on some necessary public measures, they would not hesitate a moment to think them unworthy of such a trust.

Immediate necessity makes many things convenient, which if continued would grow into oppressions. Expedience and right are different things. When the calamities of America required a consultation, there was no method so ready, or at that time so proper, as to appoint persons from the several houses of assembly for that purpose; and the wisdom with which they have proceeded hath preserved this continent from ruin. But as it is more than probable that we shall never be without a CONGRESS, every well-wisher to good order must own that the mode for choosing members of that body deserves consideration. And I put it as a question to those who make a study of mankind, whether representation and election is not too great a power for one and the same body of men to possess? When we are planning for posterity, we ought to remember that virtue is not hereditary.

It is from our enemies that we often gain excellent maxims, and are frequently surprised into reason by their mistakes. Mr. Cornwall<sup>24</sup> (one of the lords of the treasury) treated the petition of the New York assembly with contempt, because *that* house, he said, consisted but of twenty-six members, which trifling number, he argued, could not with decency be put for the whole. We thank him for his involuntary honesty.\*

TO CONCLUDE. However strange it may appear to some, or however unwilling they may be to think so, matters not, but many strong and striking reasons may be given to show that nothing can settle our affairs so expeditiously as an open and determined DECLARATION FOR INDEPENDENCE. Some of which are:

\* Those who would fully understand of what great consequence a large and equal representation is to a State should read Burgh's *Political Disquisitions*. [The allusion is to *Political Disquisitions* (3 vols., London, 1774-1775) by James Burgh (1714-1775), a British reformer friendly to the colonial cause.]

<sup>24</sup> Charles Wolfram Cornwall (1735-1789), Lord of the Treasury in North's cabinet, 1774-1780, and Speaker of the House of Commons, 1780-1789.

*First.* It is the custom of nations, when any two are at war, for some other powers not engaged in the quarrel to step in as mediators, and bring about the preliminaries of a peace; but while America calls herself the Subject of Great Britain, no power, however well disposed she may be, can offer her mediation. Wherefore, in our present state we may quarrel on forever.

*Secondly.* It is unreasonable to suppose that France or Spain will give us any kind of assistance if we mean only to make use of that assistance for the purpose of repairing the breach and strengthening the connection between Britain and America; because those powers would be sufferers by the consequences.

*Thirdly.* While we profess ourselves the subjects of Britain, we must, in the eyes of foreign nations, be considered as rebels. The precedent is somewhat dangerous to *their peace*, for men to be in arms under the name of subjects: we, on the spot, can solve the paradox; but to unite resistance and subjection requires an idea much too refined for common understanding.

*Fourthly.* Were a manifesto to be published and despatched to foreign courts, setting forth the miseries we have endured and the peaceful methods

which we have ineffectually used for redress; declaring at the same time that, not being able any longer to live happily or safely under the cruel disposition of the British court, we have been driven to the necessity of breaking off all connections with her; at the same time assuring all such courts of our peaceable disposition towards them, and of our desire of entering into trade with them: such a memorial would produce more good effects to this continent, than if a ship were freighted with petitions to Britain.

Under our present denomination of British subjects, we can neither be received nor heard abroad: the custom of all courts is against us, and will be so until by an independence we take rank with other nations.

These proceedings may at first seem strange and difficult, but like all other steps which we have already passed over, will in a little time become familiar and agreeable; and until an Independence is declared, the continent will feel itself like a man who continues putting off some unpleasant business from day to day, yet knows it must be done, hates to set about it, wishes it over, and is continually haunted with the thoughts of its necessity.

1776

## *The Crisis* <sup>25</sup>

### NUMBER I

These are the times that try men's souls. The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of his country; but he that stands it *now*, deserves the love and thanks of man and woman. Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered; yet we have this consolation with us, that the harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph. What we obtain too cheap, we esteem too lightly: it is dearness only that gives everything its value. Heaven knows how to put a proper price upon its goods; and it would be strange indeed if so celestial an article as FREEDOM should not be highly rated. Britain, with an army to enforce her tyranny, has declared that she has a right (*not only to TAX*) but "to BIND us in ALL CASES WHATSOEVER"; and if being

*bound in that manner* is not slavery, then is there not such a thing as slavery upon earth. Even the expression is impious; for so unlimited a power can belong only to God.

Whether the independence of the continent was declared too soon, or delayed too long, I will not now enter into as an argument; my own simple opinion is, that had it been eight months earlier it would have been much better. We did not make a proper use of last winter; neither could we, while we were in a dependent state. However, the fault, if it were one, was all our own; we have none to blame but ourselves. But no great deal is lost yet. All that Howe has been doing for this month past is rather a ravage than a conquest, which the spirit of the Jerseys <sup>26</sup> a year ago would have quickly repulsed, and which time and a little resolution will soon recover.

I have as little superstition in me as any man living; but my secret opinion has ever been, and still

<sup>26</sup> East and West Jersey.

<sup>25</sup> The first number of *The Crisis* appeared on December 19, 1776. The sixteenth and last number was published on December 9, 1783.

is, that God Almighty will not give up a people to military destruction, or leave them unsupportedly to perish, who have so earnestly and so repeatedly sought to avoid the calamities of war, by every decent method which wisdom could invent. Neither have I so much of the infidel in me as to suppose that he has relinquished the government of the world, and given us up to the care of devils; and as I do not, I cannot see on what grounds the king of Britain can look up to heaven for help against us: a common murderer, a highwayman, or a housebreaker, has as good a pretense as he.

It is surprising to see how rapidly a panic will sometimes run through a country. All nations and ages have been subject to them: Britain has trembled like an ague at the report of a French fleet of flat-bottomed boats; and in the fourteenth century the whole English army, after ravaging the kingdom of France, was driven back like men petrified with fear; and this brave exploit was performed by a few broken forces collected and headed by a woman, Joan of Arc.<sup>27</sup> Would that heaven might inspire some Jersey maid to spirit up her countrymen, and save her fair fellow sufferers from ravage and ravishment! Yet panics, in some cases, have their uses; they produce as much good as hurt. Their duration is always short; the mind soon grows through them, and acquires a firmer habit than before. But their peculiar advantage is, that they are the touchstones of sincerity and hypocrisy, and bring things and men to light, which might otherwise have lain forever undiscovered. In fact, they have the same effect on secret traitors which an imaginary apparition would have upon a private murderer. They sift out the hidden thoughts of man, and hold them up in public to the world. Many a disguised tory has lately shown his head, that shall penitentially solemnize with curses the day on which Howe arrived upon the Delaware.

As I was with the troops at Fort Lee,<sup>28</sup> and marched with them to the edge of Pennsylvania, I am well acquainted with many circumstances which those who live at a distance know but little or nothing of. Our situation there was exceedingly cramped, the place being a narrow neck of land<sup>29</sup> between the

North River and the Hackensack. Our force was inconsiderable, being not one-fourth so great as Howe could bring against us. We had no army at hand to have relieved the garrison, had we shut ourselves up and stood on our defense. Our ammunition, light artillery, and the best part of our stores, had been removed, on the apprehension that Howe<sup>30</sup> would endeavor to penetrate the Jerseys, in which case Fort Lee could be of no use to us; for it must occur to every thinking man, whether in the army or not, that these kind of field forts are only for temporary purposes, and last in use no longer than the enemy directs his force against the particular object which such forts are raised to defend. Such was our situation and condition at Fort Lee on the morning of the 20th of November, when an officer arrived with information that the enemy with 200 boats had landed about seven miles above. Major General Green,<sup>31</sup> who commanded the garrison, immediately ordered them under arms, and sent express to General Washington at the town of Hackensack, distant by the way of the ferry, six miles. Our first object was to secure the bridge over the Hackensack, which laid up the river between the enemy and us, about six miles from us, three from them. General Washington arrived in about three-quarters of an hour, and marched at the head of the troops towards the bridge, which place I expected we should have a brush for; however, they did not choose to dispute it with us, and the greatest part of our troops went over the bridge, the rest over the ferry, except some which passed at a mill on a small creek between the bridge and the ferry, and made their way through some marshy grounds up to the town of Hackensack, and there passed the river. We brought off as much baggage as the wagons could contain, the rest was lost. The simple object was to bring off the garrison and march them on till they could be strengthened by the Jersey or Pennsylvania militia, so as to be enabled to make a stand. We staid four days at Newark, collected our outposts with some of the Jersey militia, and marched out twice to meet the enemy on being informed that they were advancing, though our numbers were greatly inferior to theirs. Howe, in my little opinion, committed a great error in generalship in not throwing a body of forces off

<sup>27</sup> Joan of Arc (1412-1431), led the French troops in the defeat of the British at Orléans in 1429.

<sup>28</sup> Greene, in charge of the troops at Fort Lee, New Jersey, on the Hudson opposite Manhattan Island, was surprised by Cornwallis on November 20, 1776, and forced to retreat, losing many stores and some men.

<sup>29</sup> That is, between the Hackensack and Hudson rivers.

<sup>30</sup> General William Howe, commander of the British forces during the first three years of the American Revolution. See Freneau's poem "On the Memory of Brave Americans."

<sup>31</sup> Major General Nathanael Greene (1742-1786).



from Staten Island through Amboy, by which means he might have seized all our stores at Brunswick and intercepted our march into Pennsylvania; but if we believe the power of hell to be limited, we must likewise believe that their agents are under some providential control.

I shall not now attempt to give all the particulars of our retreat to the Delaware; suffice it for the present to say that both officers and men, though greatly harassed and fatigued, frequently without rest, covering, or provision—the inevitable consequences of a long retreat—bore it with a manly and martial spirit. All their wishes centered in one; which was, that the country would turn out and help them to drive the enemy back. Voltaire<sup>32</sup> has remarked that King William never appeared to full advantage but in difficulties and in action; the same remark may be made on General Washington, for the character fits him. There is a natural firmness in some minds which cannot be unlocked by trifles, but which, when un-<sup>20</sup>locked, discovers a cabinet of fortitude; and I reckon it among those kinds of public blessings, which we do not immediately see, that God hath blessed him with uninterrupted health, and given him a mind that can even flourish upon care.

I shall conclude this paper with some miscellaneous remarks on the state of our affairs; and shall begin with asking the following question, Why is it that the enemy have left the New England provinces, and made these middle ones the seat of war? The answer is easy: New England is not infested with tories, and we are. I have been tender in raising the cry against these men, and used numberless arguments to show them their danger, but it will not do to sacrifice a world either to their folly or their baseness. The period is now arrived in which either they or we must change our sentiments, or one or both must fall. And what is a tory? Good God! what is he? I should not be afraid to go with a hundred Whigs against a thousand tories,<sup>33</sup> were they to<sup>40</sup> attempt to get into arms. Every tory is a coward; for servile, slavish, self-interested fear is the foundation of toryism; and a man under such influence, though he may be cruel, never can be brave.

But, before the line of irrecoverable separation be

drawn between us, let us reason the matter together: Your conduct is an invitation to the enemy, yet not one in a thousand of you have heart enough to join him. Howe is as much deceived by you as the American cause is injured by you. He expects you will all take up arms and flock to his standard with muskets on your shoulders. Your opinions are of no use to him unless you support him personally, for it is soldiers, and not tories, that he wants.

I once felt all that kind of anger, which a man ought to feel, against the mean principles that are held by the tories: A noted one, who kept a tavern at Amboy, was standing at his door, with as pretty a child in his hand, about eight or nine years old, as I ever saw, and after speaking his mind as freely as he thought was prudent, finished with this unfatherly expression, "*Well! give me peace in my day.*" Not a man lives on the continent but fully believes that a separation must some time or other finally take<sup>20</sup> place, and a generous parent should have said, "*If there must be trouble, let it be in my day, that my child may have peace;*" and this single reflection, well applied, is sufficient to awaken every man to duty. Not a place upon earth might be so happy as America. Her situation is remote from all the wrangling world, and she has nothing to do but to trade with them. A man can distinguish himself between temper and principle; and I am as confident as I am that God governs the world, that America will never<sup>30</sup> be happy till she gets clear of foreign dominion. Wars, without ceasing, will break out till that period arrives, and the continent must in the end be conquered; for though the flame of liberty may sometimes cease to shine, the coal can never expire.

America did not, nor does not want force; but she wanted a proper application of that force. Wisdom is not the purchase of a day, and it is no wonder that we should err at the first setting off. From an excess of tenderness, we were unwilling to raise an army, and trusted our cause to the temporary defense of a well-meaning militia. A summer's experience has now taught us better; yet with those troops, while they were collected, we were able to set bounds to the progress of the enemy, and thank God! they are again assembling. I always considered militia as the best troops in the world for a sudden exertion, but they will not do for a long campaign. Howe, it is probable, will make an attempt on this city;<sup>34</sup> should

<sup>32</sup> François Arouet (1694-1778) used the *nom de plume* "Voltaire."

<sup>33</sup> Tories and Whigs, English terms connoting conservative and liberal parties, came to stand for "Loyalist" and "Rebel," respectively, in the colonies.

<sup>34</sup> That is, Philadelphia.



he fail on this side the Delaware, he is ruined. If he succeeds, our cause is not ruined.<sup>35</sup> He stakes all on his side against a part on ours; admitting he succeeds, the consequences will be that armies from both ends of the continent will march to assist their suffering friends in the middle states; for he cannot go everywhere—it is impossible. I consider Howe as the greatest enemy the tories have; he is bringing a war into their country, which, had it not been for him and partly for themselves, they had been clear of. Should he now be expelled, I wish with all the devotion of a Christian, that the names of Whig and Tory may never more be mentioned; but should the tories give him encouragement to come, or assistance if he come, I as sincerely wish that our next year's arms may expel them from the continent, and the Congress appropriate their possessions to the relief of those who have suffered in well-doing. A single successful battle next year will settle the whole. America could carry on a two years' war by the confiscation of the property of disaffected persons, and be made happy by their expulsion. Say not that this is revenge; call it rather the soft resentment of a suffering people, who, having no object in view but the *good of all*, have staked their *own all* upon a seemingly doubtful event. Yet it is folly to argue against determined hardness; eloquence may strike the ear, and the language of sorrow draw forth the tear of compassion, but nothing can reach the heart that is steeled with prejudice.

Quitting this class of men, I turn with the warm ardor of a friend to those who have nobly stood, and are yet determined to stand the matter out: I call not upon a few, but upon all: not on *this* State or *that* State, but on *every* State: up and help us; lay your shoulders to the wheel; better have too much force than too little, when so great an object is at stake. Let it be told to the future world, that in the depth of winter, when nothing but hope and virtue could survive, that the city and the country, alarmed at one common danger, came forth to meet and to repulse it. Say not that thousands are gone—turn out your tens of thousands; throw not the burden of the day upon Providence, but “*show your faith by your works*,”<sup>36</sup> that God may bless you. It matters not

where you live, or what rank of life you hold, the evil or the blessing will reach you all. The far and the near, the home counties and the back, the rich and the poor, will suffer or rejoice alike. The heart that feels not now is dead; the blood of his children will curse his cowardice who shrinks back at a time when a little might have saved the whole and made *them* happy. I love the man that can smile in trouble, that can gather strength from distress and grow brave by reflection. It is the business of little minds to shrink; but he whose heart is firm, and whose conscience approves his conduct, will pursue his principles unto death. My own line of reasoning is to myself as straight and clear as a ray of light. Not all the treasures of the world, so far as I believe, could have induced me to support an offensive war, for I think it murder; but if a thief breaks into my house, burns and destroys my property, and kills or threatens to kill me or those that are in it, and to “*bind me in all cases whatsoever*” to his absolute will, am I to suffer it? What signifies it to me whether he who does it is a king or a common man; my countryman or not my countryman; whether it be done by an individual villain, or an army of them? If we reason to the root of things we shall find no difference; neither can any just cause be assigned why we should punish in the one case and pardon in the other. Let them call me rebel and welcome—I feel no concern from it; but I should suffer the misery of devils, were I to make a whore of my soul by swearing allegiance to one whose character is that of a sottish, stupid, stubborn, worthless, brutish man. I conceive likewise a horrid idea in receiving mercy from a being, who at the last day shall be shrieking to the rocks and mountains to cover him, and fleeing with terror from the orphan, the widow, and the slain of America.

There are cases which cannot be overdone by language, and this is one. There are persons, too, who see not the full extent of the evil which threatens them; they solace themselves with hopes that the enemy, if he succeed, will be merciful. It is the madness of folly, to expect mercy from those who have refused to do justice; and even mercy, where conquest is the object, is only a trick of war. The cunning of the fox is as murderous as the violence of the wolf, and we ought to guard equally against both. Howe's first object is, partly by threats and partly by promises, to terrify or seduce the people to deliver

<sup>35</sup> Paine's prediction materialized in September, 1777, but Howe's capture of Philadelphia so weakened the position of the British in the North that the Americans were able to defeat Burgoyne.

<sup>36</sup> See James 2:18.

up their arms and receive mercy. The ministry recommended the same plan to Gage,<sup>37</sup> and this is what the Tories call making their peace, "*a peace which passeth all understanding*,"<sup>38</sup> indeed! A peace which would be the immediate forerunner of a worse ruin than any we have yet thought of. Ye men of Pennsylvania, do reason upon these things! Were the back counties to give up their arms, they would fall an easy prey to the Indians, who are all armed: this perhaps is what some Tories would not be sorry for. Were the home counties to deliver up their arms, they would be exposed to the resentment of the back counties, who would then have it in their power to chastise their defection at pleasure. And were any one State to give up its arms, *that* State must be garrisoned by all Howe's army of Britons and Hessians<sup>39</sup> to preserve it from the anger of the rest. Mutual fear is the principal link in the chain of mutual love; and woe be to that State that breaks the compact. Howe is mercifully inviting you to barbarous destruction,<sup>40</sup> and men must be either rogues or fools that will not see it. I dwell not upon the vapors of imagination; I bring reason to your ears, and, in language as plain as A B C, hold up truth to your eyes.

I thank God that I fear not. I see no real cause for fear. I know our situation well, and can see the way out of it. While our army was collected, Howe dared not risk a battle; and it is no credit to him that he decamped from the White Plains,<sup>40</sup> and

waited a mean opportunity to ravage the defenseless Jerseys; but it is great credit to us, that with a handful of men, we sustained an orderly retreat for near a hundred miles, brought off our ammunition, all our fieldpieces, the greatest part of our stores, and had four rivers to pass. None can say that our retreat was precipitate; for we were near three weeks in performing it, that the country<sup>41</sup> might have time to come in. Twice we marched back to meet the enemy, and remained out till dark. The sign of fear was not seen in our camp, and had not some of the cowardly and disaffected inhabitants spread false alarms through the country, the Jerseys had never been ravaged. Once more we are again collected and collecting, our new army at both ends of the continent is recruiting fast, and we shall be able to open the next campaign with sixty thousand men, well-armed and clothed. This is our situation, and who will may know it. By perseverance and fortitude we have the prospect of a glorious issue; by cowardice and submission, the sad choice of a variety of evils: a ravaged country—a depopulated city—habitations without safety, and slavery without hope—our homes turned into barracks and bawdy-houses for Hessians—and a future race to provide for, whose fathers we shall doubt of. Look on this picture and weep over it! and if there yet remains one thoughtless wretch who believes it not, let him suffer it unlamented.

Common Sense

December 23, 1776<sup>42</sup>

### *The Rights of Man*<sup>43</sup>

BEING AN ANSWER TO MR. BURKE'S ATTACK ON THE FRENCH REVOLUTION<sup>44</sup>

FROM PART I

[On the Nature and Origin of Rights]

Before anything can be reasoned upon to a conclusion, certain facts, principles, or data, to reason from, must be established, admitted, or denied. Mr. Burke, with his usual outrage, abuses the *declaration*

<sup>37</sup> Thomas Gage (1721–1787), Howe's successor.

<sup>38</sup> Philippians 4:7.

<sup>39</sup> Britain hired some 30,000 "mercenaries," chiefly from Hesse-Cassel, Hesse-Hanau, and Brunswick (German principalities).

<sup>40</sup> The battle of White Plains, north of New York City, between the Hudson River and Long Island Sound, was an indecisive encounter between Washington and Howe on October 28, 1776.

of the rights of man, published by the national assembly of France as the basis on which the constitution of France is built. This he calls "paltry and blurred sheets of paper about the rights of man." Does Mr. Burke mean to deny that *man* has any rights? If he does, then he must mean that there are no such things as rights anywhere, and that he has none himself; for who is there in the world but man?

<sup>41</sup> That is, the local militia.

<sup>42</sup> This first number appeared in the *Pennsylvania Journal* on December 19, although Paine dated it December 23.

<sup>43</sup> Published March 13, 1791.

<sup>44</sup> That is, upon Burke's *Reflections on the French Revolution*, which had appeared on November 1, 1790.

But if Mr. Burke means to admit that man has rights, the question then will be, what are those rights, and how came man by them originally?

The error of those who reason by precedents drawn from antiquity, respecting the rights of man, is that they do not go far enough into antiquity. They do not go the whole way. They stop in some of the intermediate stages of a hundred or a thousand years, and produce what was then done as a rule for the present day. This is no authority at all. If we travel 10 still further into antiquity, we shall find a directly contrary opinion and practice prevailing; and if antiquity is to be authority, a thousand such authorities may be produced, successively contradicting each other: but if we proceed on, we shall at last come out right: we shall come to the time when man came from the hand of his maker. What was he then? Man. Man was his high and only title, and a higher cannot be given him. But of titles I shall speak hereafter.

We have now arrived at the origin of man, and at the origin of his rights. As to the manner in which the world has been governed from that day to this, it is no further any concern of ours than to make a proper use of the errors or the improvements which the history of it presents. Those who lived a hundred or a thousand years ago were then moderns as we are now. They had *their* ancients and those ancients had others, and we also shall be ancients in our turn. If the mere name of antiquity is to govern in the affairs 30 of life, the people who are to live a hundred or a thousand years hence may as well take us for a precedent, as we make a precedent of those who lived a hundred or a thousand years ago. The fact is that portions of antiquity, by proving **everything**, establish nothing. It is authority against authority all the way till we come to the divine origin of the rights of man at the creation. Here our inquiries find a resting-place, and our reason finds a home. If a dispute about the rights of man had arisen at the 40 distance of a hundred years from the creation, it is to this source of authority they must have referred, and it is to the same source of authority that we must now refer.

Though I mean not to touch upon any sectarian principle of religion, yet it may be worth observing that the genealogy of Christ is traced to Adam. Why then not trace the rights of man to the creation of man? I will answer the question. Because there have

been an upstart of governments, thrusting themselves between, and presumptuously working to *un-make* man.

If any generation of men ever possessed the right of dictating the mode by which the world should be governed forever, it was the first generation that existed; and if that generation did not do it, no succeeding generation can show any authority for doing it, nor set any up. The illuminating and divine principles of the equal rights of man (for it has its origin from the maker of man) relates, not only to the living individuals, but to generations of men succeeding each other. Every generation is equal in rights to the generations which preceded it, by the same rule that every individual is born equal in rights with his contemporary.

Every history of the creation, and every traditional account, whether from the lettered or unlettered world, however they may vary in their opinion 20 or belief of certain particulars, all agree in establishing one point, *the unity of man*; by which I mean that man is all of *one degree*, and consequently that all men are born equal and with equal natural rights, in the same manner as if posterity had been continued by *creation* instead of *generation*, the latter being only the mode by which the former is carried forward; and consequently every child born into the world must be considered as deriving its existence from God. The world is as new to him as it was to the first man that existed, and his natural right in it is of the same kind.

The Mosaic account of the creation, whether taken as divine authority, or merely historical, is fully up to this point, *the unity or equality of man*. The expressions admit of no controversy. "And God said, let us make man in our own image. In the image of God created he him; male and female created he them." The distinction of sexes is pointed out, but no other distinction is even implied. If this be not divine authority, it is at least historical authority, and shows that the equality of man, so far from being a modern doctrine, is the oldest upon record.

It is also to be observed that all the religions known in the world are founded, so far as they relate to man, on the *unity of man* as being all of one degree. Whether in heaven or in hell or in whatever state man may be supposed to exist hereafter, the good and the bad are the only distinctions. Nay, even

the laws of governments are obliged to slide into this principle by making degrees to consist in crimes and not in persons.

It is one of the greatest of all truths, and of the highest advantage to cultivate. By considering man in this light, and by instructing him to consider himself in this light, it places him in a close connection with all his duties, whether to his creator, or to the creation of which he is a part; and it is only when he forgets his origin or, to use a more fashionable phrase, *his birth and family*, that he becomes dissolute. It is not among the least of the evils of the present existing governments in all parts of Europe, that man, considered as man, is thrown back to a vast distance from his maker, and the artificial chasm filled up by a succession of barriers, or a sort of turnpike gates, through which he has to pass. I will quote Mr. Burke's catalogue of barriers that he has set up between man and his maker. Putting himself in the character of a herald, he says, "We fear God—we look with awe to kings—with affection to parliaments—with duty to magistrates—with reverence to priests, and with respect to nobility." Mr. Burke has forgot to put in "chivalry." He has also forgot to put in Peter.

The duty of man is not a wilderness of turnpike gates through which he is to pass by tickets from one to the other. It is plain and simple, and consists but of two points. His duty to God, which every man must feel; and with respect to his neighbor, to do as he would be done by. If those to whom power is delegated do well, they will be respected; if not they will be despised; and with regard to those to whom no power is delegated, but who assume it, the rational world can know nothing of them.

Hitherto we have spoken only (and that but in part) of the natural rights of man. We have now to consider the civil rights of man, and to show how the one originates out of the other. Man did not enter into society to become worse than he was before, nor to have less rights than he had before, but to have those rights better secured. His natural rights are the foundation of all his civil rights. But in order to pursue this distinction with more precision, it is necessary to mark the different qualities of natural and civil rights.

A few words will explain this. Natural rights are those which always appertain to man in right of his existence. Of this kind are all the intellectual rights,

or rights of the mind, and also all those rights of acting as an individual for his own comfort and happiness, which are not injurious to the rights of others. Civil rights are those which appertain to man in right of his being a member of society. Every civil right has for its foundation some natural right pre-existing in the individual, but to which his individual power is not, in all cases, sufficiently competent. Of this kind are all those which relate to security and protection.

From this short review, it will be easy to distinguish between that class of natural rights which man retains after entering into society and those which he throws into common stock as a member of society.

The natural rights which he retains are all those in which the power to execute it is as perfect in the individual as the right itself. Among this class, as is before mentioned, are all the intellectual rights, or rights of the mind: consequently, religion is one of those rights. The natural rights which are not retained are all those in which, though the right is perfect in the individual, the power to execute them is defective. They answer not his purpose. A man, by natural right, has a right to judge in his own cause; and so far as the right of the mind is concerned, he never surrenders it: but what availeth it him to judge, if he has not power to redress? He therefore deposits this right in the common stock of society, and takes the arm of society, of which he is a part, in preference and in addition to his own. Society *grants* him nothing. Every man is a proprietor in society, and draws on the capital as a matter of right.

From these premises, two or three certain conclusions will follow.

1st, That every civil right grows out of a natural right; or, in other words, is a natural right exchanged.

2nd, That civil power, properly considered as such, is made up of the aggregate of that class of the natural rights of man which becomes defective in the individual in point of power, and answers not his purpose, but when collected to a focus, becomes competent to the purpose of everyone.

3d, That the power produced by the aggregate of natural rights, imperfect in power in the individual, cannot be applied to invade the natural rights which are retained in the individual, and in which the power to execute is as perfect as the right itself.

We have now, in a few words, traced man from a natural individual to a member of society, and shown, or endeavored to show, the quality of the natural rights retained and of those which are exchanged for civil rights. Let us now apply those principles to government.

In casting our eyes over the world, it is extremely easy to distinguish the governments which have arisen out of society, or out of the social compact, from those which have not: but to place this in a clearer light than what a single glance may afford, it will be proper to take a review of the several sources from which governments have arisen and on which they have been founded.

They may be all comprehended under three heads: 1st, superstition; 2d, power; 3d, the common interests of society, and the common rights of man.

The first was a government of priestcraft, the second of conquerors, and the third of reason.

When a set of artful men pretended, through the medium of oracles, to hold intercourse with the deity as familiarly as they now march up the back stairs in European courts, the world was completely under the government of superstition. The oracles were consulted, and whatever they were made to say became the law; and this sort of government lasted just as long as this sort of superstition lasted.

After these a race of conquerors arose, whose government, like that of William the Conqueror, was founded in power, and the sword assumed the name of a scepter. Governments thus established last as long as the power to support them lasts; but that they might avail themselves of every engine in their favor, they united fraud to force, and set up an idol which they called *divine right*, and which, in imitation of the pope who affects to be spiritual and temporal, and in contradiction to the founder of the Christian religion, twisted itself afterwards into an idol of another shape, called *church and state*. The key of St. Peter and the key of the treasury became quar-  
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When I contemplate the natural dignity of man; when I feel (for nature has not been kind enough to me to blunt my feelings) for the honor and happiness of its character, I become irritated at the attempt to govern mankind by force and fraud as if they were all knaves and fools, and can scarcely avoid feeling disgust for those who are thus imposed upon.

We have now to review the governments which arise out of society, in contradistinction to those which arose out of superstition and conquest.

It has been thought a considerable advance towards establishing the principles of freedom, to say that government is a compact between those who govern and those who are governed: but this cannot be true, because it is putting the effect before the cause; for as man must have existed before governments existed, there necessarily was a time when governments did not exist, and consequently there could originally exist no governors to form such a compact with. The fact therefore must be that the *individuals themselves*, each in his own personal and sovereign right, *entered into a compact with each other* to produce a government: and this is the only mode in which governments have a right to be established; and the only principle on which they have a right to exist.

To possess ourselves of a clear idea of what government is or ought to be, we must trace it to its origin. In doing this we shall easily discover that governments must have arisen, either *out* of the people, or *over* the people. Mr. Burke has made no distinction. He investigates nothing to its source, and therefore he confounds everything: but he has signified his intention of undertaking, at some future opportunity, a comparison between the constitutions of England and France. As he thus renders it a subject of controversy by throwing the gauntlet, I take him up on his own ground. It is in high challenges that high truths have the right of appearing; and I accept it with the more readiness, because it affords me, at the same time, an opportunity of pursuing the subject with respect to governments arising out of society.

But it will be first necessary to define what is meant by a *constitution*. It is not sufficient that we adopt the word; we must fix also a standard signifi-  
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A constitution is not a thing in name only, but in fact. It has not an ideal, but a real existence; and wherever it cannot be produced in a visible form there is none. A constitution is a thing antecedent to a government, and a government is only the creature of a constitution. The constitution of a country is not the act of its government, but of the people constituting a government. It is the body of elements, to which you can refer, and quote article by article; and

contains the principles on which the government shall be established, the form in which it shall be organized, the powers it shall have, the mode of elections, the duration of parliaments, or by what other name such bodies may be called; the powers which the executive part of the government shall have; and, in fine, everything that relates to the complete organization of a civil government, and the

principle on which it shall act, and by which it shall be bound. A constitution, therefore, is to a government what the laws made afterwards by that government are to a court of judicature. The court of judicature does not make laws, neither can it alter them; it only acts in conformity to the laws made; and the government is in like manner governed by the constitution.

### *The Age of Reason* <sup>45</sup>

BEING AN INVESTIGATION OF THE TRUE AND OF FABULOUS THEOLOGY

#### PART FIRST

#### [Dedication]

To My Fellow-Citizens of the  
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

I put the following work under your protection. It contains my opinion upon religion. You will do me the justice to remember that I have always strenuously supported the right of every man to his own opinion, however different that opinion might be to mine. He who denies to another this right makes a slave of himself to his present opinion, because he <sup>20</sup> precludes himself the right of changing it.

The most formidable weapon against errors of every kind is reason. I have never used any other, and I trust I never shall.

Your affectionate friend and fellow-citizen.

Thomas Paine

*Paris, 8th Pluviose,  
Second Year of the French Republic, one and  
indivisible.  
January 27, O. S. 1794.*

#### [Credo]

It has been my intention for several years past to publish my thoughts upon Religion. I am well aware of the difficulties that attend the subject; and from that consideration had reserved it to a more advanced period of life. I intended it to be the last offering I should make to my fellow-citizens of all nations, and that at a time when the purity of the motive that

induced me to it could not admit of a question, even <sup>10</sup> by those who might disapprove the work.

The circumstance that has now taken place in France, <sup>46</sup> of the total abolition of the whole national order of priesthood and of everything appertaining to compulsive systems or religion and compulsive articles of faith, has not only precipitated my intention, but rendered a work of this kind exceedingly necessary; lest, in the general wreck of superstition, of false systems of government, and false theology, we lose sight of morality, of humanity, and of the theology that is true.

As several of my colleagues, and others of my fellow-citizens of France, have given me the example of making their voluntary and individual profession of faith, I also will make mine; and I do this with all that sincerity and frankness with which the mind of man communicates with itself.

I believe in one God, and no more; and I hope for happiness beyond this life.

I believe in the equality of man, and I believe that <sup>30</sup> religious duties consist in doing justice, loving mercy, and endeavoring to make our fellow-creatures happy.

But lest it should be supposed that I believe many other things in addition to these, I shall, in the progress of this work, declare the things I do not believe and my reasons for not believing them.

I do not believe in the creed professed by the Jewish church, by the Roman church, by the Greek church, by the Turkish church, by the Protestant church, nor by any church that I know of. My own <sup>40</sup> mind is my own church.

All national institutions of churches—whether Jewish, Christian, or Turkish—appear to me no other

<sup>45</sup> *The Age of Reason* appeared in two parts, 1794 and 1795. Numerous editions, showing marked variations, soon came into existence. The text here reprinted presents the first twelve chapters of Part I, following the first edition, which appeared in Paris in 1794. The chapter headings are translations of the first version that appeared in French.

<sup>46</sup> A reference to the actions of the National Convention since 1792.

than human inventions set up to terrify and enslave mankind and monopolize power and profit.

I do not mean by this declaration to condemn those who believe otherwise. They have the same right to their belief as I have to mine. But it is necessary to the happiness of man that he be mentally faithful to himself. Infidelity does not consist in believing or in disbelieving; it consists in professing to believe what he does not believe.

It is impossible to calculate the moral mischief, if I may so express it, that mental lying has produced in society. When a man has so far corrupted and prostituted the chastity of his mind as to subscribe his professional belief to things he does not believe, he has prepared himself for the commission of every other crime. He takes up the trade of a priest for the sake of gain, and, in order to *qualify* himself for that trade, he begins with a perjury. Can we conceive anything more destructive to morality than this?

Soon after I had published the pamphlet, *COMMON SENSE*, in America, I saw the exceeding probability that a revolution in the system of government would be followed by a revolution in the system of religion. The adulterous connection of church and state, wherever it had taken place, whether Jewish, Christian, or Turkish, had so effectually prohibited, by pains and penalties, every discussion upon established creeds and upon first principles of religion, that until the system of government should be changed those subjects could not be brought fairly 30 and openly before the world; but that whenever this should be done, a revolution in the system of religion would follow. Human inventions and priestcraft would be detected, and man would return to the pure, unmixed, and unadulterated belief of one God, and no more.

## [CHAPTER II.]

### Of Missions and Revelations]

Every national church or religion has established itself by pretending some special mission from God, communicated to certain individuals. The Jews have their Moses; the Christians their Jesus Christ, their apostles and saints; and the Turks their Mahomet—as if the way to God was not open to every man alike.

Each of those churches show certain books which they call *revelation*, or the word of God. The Jews

say that their word of God was given by God to Moses face to face; the Christians say that their word of God came by divine inspiration; and the Turks say that their word of God (the Koran) was brought by an angel from heaven. Each of those churches accuse the other of unbelief; and, for my own part, I disbelieve them all.

As it is necessary to affix right ideas to words, I will, before I proceed further into the subject, offer some observations on the word *revelation*. Revelation, when applied to religion, means something communicated *immediately* from God to man.

No one will deny or dispute the power of the Almighty to make such a communication, if he pleases. But admitting, for the sake of a case, that something has been revealed to a certain person, and not revealed to any other person, it is revelation to that person only. When he tells it to a second person, a second to a third, a third to a fourth, and so on, it ceases to be a revelation to all those persons. It is a revelation to the first person only, and *hearsay* to every other; and, consequently, they are not obliged to believe it.

It is a contradiction in terms and ideas to call anything a revelation that comes to us at second-hand, either verbally or in writing. Revelation is necessarily limited to the first communication. After this, it is only an account of something which that person says was a revelation made to him; and though he may find himself obliged to believe it, it cannot be incumbent upon me to believe it in the same manner, for it was not a revelation to *me*, and I have only his word for it that it was made to *him*.

When Moses told the children of Israel that he received the two tables of commandments from the hand of God, they were not obliged to believe him, because they had no other authority for it than his telling them so; and I have no other authority for it than some historian telling me so. The command- 40 ments carry no internal evidence of divinity with them. They contain some good moral precepts, such as any man qualified to be a lawgiver, or a legislator, could produce himself, without having recourse to supernatural intervention.\*

When I am told that the Koran was written in heaven, and brought to Mahomet by an angel, the

\* It is, however, necessary to except the declaration which says that God visits the sins of the fathers upon the children. This is contrary to every principle of moral justice.

account comes too near the same kind of hearsay evidence and secondhand authority as the former. I did not see the angel myself, and therefore I have a right not to believe it.

When also I am told that a woman, called the Virgin Mary, said, or gave out, that she was with child without any cohabitation with a man, and that her betrothed husband, Joseph, said that an angel told him so, I have a right to believe them or not; such a circumstance required a much stronger evi-<sup>10</sup> dence than their bare word for it; but we have not even this; for neither Joseph nor Mary wrote any such matter themselves. It is only reported by others that *they said so*. It is hearsay upon hearsay, and I do not choose to rest my belief upon such evidence.

It is, however, not difficult to account for the credit that was given to the story of Jesus Christ being the Son of God. He was born at a time when the heathen mythology had still some fashion and repute in the world, and that mythology had prepared the people<sup>20</sup> for the belief of such a story. Almost all the extraordinary men that lived under the heathen mythology were reputed to be the sons of some of their gods. It was not a new thing, at that time, to believe a man to have been celestially begotten; the intercourse of gods with women was then a matter of familiar opinion. Their Jupiter, according to their accounts, had cohabited with hundreds; the story therefore had nothing in it either new, wonderful, or obscene; it was conformable to the opinions that then prevailed<sup>30</sup> among the people called Gentiles, or mythologists, and it was those people only that believed it. The Jews, who had kept strictly to the belief of one God and no more, and who had always rejected the heathen mythology, never credited the story.

It is curious to observe how the theory of what is called the Christian church sprung out of the tail of the heathen mythology. A direct incorporation took place, in the first instance, by making the reputed founder to be celestially begotten. The trinity of gods<sup>40</sup> that then followed was no other than a reduction of the former plurality, which was about twenty or thirty thousand. The statue of Mary succeeded the statue of Diana of Ephesus.<sup>47</sup> The deification of heroes changed into the canonization of saints. The mythologists had gods for everything; the Christian mythologists had saints for everything. The church became

<sup>47</sup> The Shrine of Diana was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. See Acts 19.

as crowded with the one as the pantheon had been with the other; and Rome was the place of both. The Christian theory is little else than the idolatry of the ancient mythologists, accommodated to the purposes of power and revenue; and it yet remains to reason and philosophy to abolish the amphibious fraud.

### [CHAPTER III.

#### Concerning the Character of Jesus Christ and His History]

Nothing that is here said can apply, even with the most distant disrespect, to the real character of Jesus Christ. He was a virtuous and an amiable man. The morality that he preached and practiced was of the most benevolent kind; and though similar systems of morality had been preached by Confucius,<sup>48</sup> and by some of the Greek philosophers, many years before, by the Quakers since, and by many good men in all ages, it has not been exceeded by any.

Jesus Christ wrote no account of himself, of his birth, parentage, or anything else. Not a line of what is called the New Testament is of his writing. The history of him is altogether the work of other people; and as to the account given of his resurrection and ascension, it was the necessary counterpart to the story of his birth. His historians, having brought him into the world in supernatural manner, were obliged to take him out again in the same manner, or the first part of the story must have fallen to the ground.

The wretched contrivance with which this latter part is told exceeds everything that went before it. The first part, that of the miraculous conception, was not a thing that admitted of publicity; and therefore the tellers of this part of the story had this advantage, that though they might not be credited they could not be detected. They could not be expected to prove it, because it was not one of those things that admitted of proof, and it was impossible that the person of whom it was told could prove it himself.

But the resurrection of a dead person from the grave, and his ascension through the air, is a thing very different, as to the evidence it admits of, to the invisible conception of a child in the womb. The resurrection and ascension, supposing them to have taken place, admitted of public and ocular demonstration, like that of the ascension of a balloon, or the sun at noonday, to all Jerusalem at least. A thing which everybody is required to believe requires that

<sup>48</sup> Confucius (551?-478 B.C.), Chinese philosopher.



the proof and evidence of it should be equal to all, and universal; and as the public visibility of this last related act was the only evidence that could give sanction to the former part, the whole of it falls to the ground because that evidence never was given. Instead of this, a small number of persons, not more than eight or nine, are introduced as proxies for the whole world, to say they *saw it*, and all the rest of the world are called upon to believe it. But it appears that Thomas did not believe the resurrection;<sup>49</sup> and, as they say, would not believe without having ocular and manual demonstration himself. *So neither will I*; and the reason is equally as good for me, and for every other person, as for Thomas. . . .

## [CHAPTER IX.]

## In What the True Revelation Consists]

But some perhaps will say: Are we to have no word of God—no revelation? I answer: Yes; there is a word of God; there is a revelation.

THE WORD OF GOD IS THE CREATION WE BEHOLD; and it is in *this word*, which no human invention can counterfeit or alter, that God speaketh universally to man.

Human language is local and changeable, and is therefore incapable of being used as the means of unchangeable and universal information. The idea that God sent Jesus Christ to publish, as they say, the glad tidings to all nations from one end of the earth unto the other, is consistent only with the ignorance of those who knew nothing of the extent of the world, and who believed, as those world-saviors believed and continued to believe for several centuries (and that in contradiction to the discoveries of philosophers and the experience of navigators), that the earth was flat like a trencher; and that a man might walk to the end of it.

But how was Jesus Christ to make anything known to all nations? He could speak but one language, which was Hebrew; and there are in the world several hundred languages. Scarcely any two nations speak the same language, or understand each other; and as to translations, every man who knows anything of languages knows that it is impossible to translate from one language into another, not only without losing a great part of the original but frequently of mistaking the sense; and, besides all this, the art of

<sup>49</sup> See John 20:24-29.

printing was wholly unknown at the time Christ lived.

It is always necessary that the means that are to accomplish any end be equal to the accomplishment of that end, or the end cannot be accomplished. It is in this that the difference between finite and infinite power and wisdom discovers itself. Man frequently fails in accomplishing his ends from a natural inability of the power to the purpose; and frequently from the want of wisdom to apply power properly. But it is impossible for infinite power and wisdom to fail as man faileth. The means it useth are always equal to the end; but human language, more especially as there is not a universal language, is incapable of being used as a universal means of unchangeable and uniform information; and therefore it is not the means that God useth in manifesting himself universally to man.

It is only in the CREATION that all our ideas and conceptions of a *word of God* can unite. The creation speaketh a universal language, independently of human speech or human languages, multiplied and various as they be. It is an ever existing original which every man can read. It cannot be forged; it cannot be counterfeited; it cannot be lost; it cannot be altered; it cannot be suppressed. It does not depend upon the will of man whether it shall be published or not; it publishes itself from one end of the earth to the other. It preaches to all nations and to all worlds; and this *word of God* reveals to man all that is necessary for man to know of God.

Do we want to contemplate his power? We see it in the immensity of the creation. Do we want to contemplate his wisdom? We see it in the unchangeable order by which the incomprehensible whole is governed. Do we want to contemplate his munificence? We see it in the abundance with which he fills the earth. Do we want to contemplate his mercy? We see it in his not withholding that abundance even from the unthankful. In fine, do we want to know what God is? Search not the book called the Scripture, which any human hand might make, but the scripture called the Creation.

## [CHAPTER X.]

## Concerning God, and the Lights Cast on His Existence and Attributes by the Bible]

The only idea man can affix to the name of God is that of a *first cause*, the cause of all things. And in-

comprehensibly difficult as it is for man to conceive what a first cause is, he arrives at the belief of it from the tenfold greater difficulty of disbelieving it. It is difficult beyond description to conceive that space can have no end; but it is more difficult to conceive an end. It is difficult beyond the power of man to conceive an eternal duration of what we call time; but it is more impossible to conceive a time when there shall be no time. In like manner of reasoning, everything we behold carries in itself the internal 10 evidence that it did not make itself. Every man is an evidence to himself that he did not make himself; neither could his father make himself, nor his grandfather, nor any of his race; neither could any tree, plant, or animal make itself; and it is the conviction arising from this evidence that carries us on, as it were, by necessity, to the belief of a first cause eternally existing, of a nature totally different to any material existence we know of, and by the power of which all things exist; and this first cause, man calls 20 God.

It is only by the exercise of reason that man can discover God. Take away that reason and he would be incapable of understanding anything; and, in this case, it would be just as consistent to read even the book called the Bible to a horse as to a man. How then is it that those people pretend to reject reason?

Almost the only parts of the book called the Bible that convey to us any idea of God are some chapters in Job, and the 19th Psalm; I recollect no other. 30 Those parts are true *deistical* compositions; for they treat of the *Deity* through his works. They take the book of Creation as the word of God; they refer to no other book; and all the inferences they make are drawn from that volume.

I insert, in this place, the 19th Psalm, as paraphrased into English verse by Addison. I recollect not the prose, and where I write this I have not the opportunity of seeing it.

The spacious firmament on high,  
With all the blue ethereal sky,  
And spangled heavens, a shining frame,  
Their great original proclaim.  
The unwearied sun, from day to day,  
Does his Creator's power display,  
And publishes to every land  
The work of an Almighty hand.

Soon as the evening shades prevail  
The moon takes up the wondrous tale,

And nightly to the listening earth  
Repeats the story of her birth;  
Whilst all the stars that round her burn,  
And all the planets in their turn,  
Confirm the tidings as they roll  
And spread the truth from pole to pole.

What though in solemn silence all  
Move round the dark terrestrial ball?  
What though nor real voice, nor sound,  
Amidst their radiant orbs be found?  
In reason's ear they all rejoice,  
And utter forth a glorious voice;  
Forever singing as they shine,  
THE HAND THAT MADE US IS DIVINE.

What more does man want to know than that the hand or power that made these things is divine, is omnipotent? Let him believe this with the force it is impossible to repel, if he permits his reason to act, and his rule of moral life will follow of course.

The allusions in Job have, all of them, the same tendency with this Psalm; that of deducing or proving a truth, that would otherwise be unknown, from truths already known.

I recollect not enough of the passages in Job to insert them correctly; but there is one that occurs to me that is applicable to the subject I am speaking upon: "Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty to perfection?"

I know not how the printers have pointed this passage, for I keep no Bible; but it contains two distinct questions that admit of distinct answers.

First, Canst thou by *searching* find out God? Yes, because, in the first place, I know I did not make myself, and yet I have existence; and by *searching* into the nature of other things, I find that no other thing could make itself; and yet millions of other things exist; therefore it is that I know, by positive conclusion resulting from this search, that there is a power superior to all those things, and that power is God.

40 Secondly, Canst thou find out the Almighty to *perfection*? No, not only because the power and wisdom he had manifested in the structure of the Creation that I behold is to me incomprehensible; but because even this manifestation, great as it is, is probably but a small display of that immensity of power and wisdom by which millions of other worlds, to me invisible by their distance, were created and continue to exist.

It is evident that both these questions were put

to the reason of the person to whom they are supposed to have been addressed; and it is only by admitting the first question to be answered affirmatively that the second could follow. It would have been unnecessary, and even absurd, to have put a second question more difficult than the first, if the first question had been answered negatively. The two questions have different objects; the first refers to the existence of God, the second to his attributes. Reason can discover the one, but it falls infinitely short in 10 discovering the whole of the other.

I recollect not a single passage in all the writings ascribed to the men called apostles that conveys any idea of what God is. Those writings are chiefly controversial; and the gloominess of the subject they dwell upon, that of a man dying in agony on a cross, is better suited to the gloomy genius of a monk in a cell, by whom it is not impossible they were written, than to any man breathing the open air of the Creation. The only passage that occurs to me, that has any 20 reference to the works of God, by which only his power and wisdom can be known, is related to have been spoken by Jesus Christ as a remedy against distrustful care. "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin." This, however, is far inferior to the allusions in Job and in the nineteenth Psalm; but it is similar in idea, and the modesty of the imagery is correspondent to the modesty of the man.

#### [CHAPTER XI.

#### Of the Theology of the Christians; and the True Theology]

As to the Christian system of faith, it appears to me as a species of atheism; a sort of religious denial of God. It professes to believe in a man rather than in God. It is a compound made up chiefly of manism, with but little deism, and is as near to atheism as twilight is to darkness. It introduces between man and his Maker an opaque body, which it calls a 40 Redeemer, as the moon introduces her opaque self between the earth and the sun; and it produces by this means a religious or an irreligious eclipse of light. It has put the whole orb of reason into shade.

The effect of this obscurity has been that of turning everything upside down and representing it in reverse; and among the revolutions it has thus magically produced, it has made a revolution in theology.

That which is now called natural philosophy, em-

bracing the whole circle of science of which astronomy occupied the chief place, is the study of the works of God, and of the power and wisdom of God and his works, and is the true theology.

As to the theology that is now studied in its place, it is the study of human opinions and of human fancies *concerning* God. It is not the study of God himself in the works that he has made, but in the works or writings that man has made; and it is not among the least of the mischiefs that the Christian system has done to the world that it has abandoned the original and beautiful system of theology, like a beautiful innocent, to distress and reproach, to make room for the hag of superstition.

The book of Job and the 19th Psalm, which even the church admits to be more ancient than the chronological order in which they stand in the book called the Bible, are theological orations conformable to the original system of theology. The internal evidence of those orations proves to a demonstration that the study and contemplation of the works of creation, and of the power and wisdom of God revealed and manifested in those works, make a great part of the religious devotion of the times in which they were written; and it was this devotional study and contemplation that led to the discovery of the principles upon which what are now called sciences are established; and it is to the discovery of these principles that almost all the arts that contribute to the convenience of human life owe their existence. Every 30 principal art has some science for its parent, though the person who mechanically performs the work does not always, and but very seldom, perceive the connection.

It is a fraud of the Christian system to call the sciences *human invention*; it is only the application of them that is human. Every science has for its basis a system of principles as fixed and unalterable as those by which the universe is regulated and governed. Man cannot make principles; he can only discover them.

For example. Every person who looks at an almanac sees an account when an eclipse will take place, and he sees also that it never fails to take place according to the account there given. This shows that man is acquainted with the laws by which the heavenly bodies move. But it would be something worse than ignorance were any church on earth to say that those laws are a human invention.

It would also be ignorance or something worse to say that the scientific principles, by the aid of which man is enabled to calculate and foreknow when an eclipse will take place, are a human invention. Man cannot invent anything that is eternal and immutable, and the scientific principles he employs for this purpose must be, and are, of necessity, as eternal and immutable as the laws by which the heavenly bodies move, or they could not be used as they are to ascertain the time when, and the manner how, an eclipse 10 will take place.

The scientific principles that man employs to obtain the foreknowledge of an eclipse, or of anything else relating to the motion of the heavenly bodies, are contained chiefly in that part of science that is called trigonometry, or the property of a triangle, which, when applied to the study of the heavenly bodies, is called astronomy; when applied to direct the course of a ship on the ocean, it is called navigation; when 20 applied to the construction of figures drawn by rule and compass, it is called geometry; when applied to the construction of plans of edifices, it is called architecture; when applied to the measurement of any portion of the surface of the earth, it is called land-surveying. In fine, it is the soul of science. It is an eternal truth; it contains the *mathematical demonstration* of which man speaks, and the extent of its uses is unknown.

It may be said that man can make or draw a triangle, and therefore a triangle is a human inven- 30 tion.

But the triangle, when drawn, is no other than the image of the principle; it is a delineation of the eye, and from thence to the mind, of a principle that would otherwise be imperceptible. The triangle does not make the principle any more than a candle, taken into a room that was dark, makes the chairs and tables that before were invisible. All the properties of a triangle exist independently of the figure, and existed before any triangle was drawn or thought of 40 by man. Man had no more to do in the formation of those properties, or principles, than he had to do in making the laws by which the heavenly bodies move; and therefore the one must have the same divine origin as the other.

In the same manner as it may be said that man can make a triangle so also may it be said he can make the mechanical instrument called a lever; but the principle by which the lever acts is a thing distinct

from the instrument and would exist if the instrument did not; it attaches itself to the instrument after it is made; the instrument, therefore, can act no otherwise than it does act; neither can all the efforts of human invention make it act otherwise. That which, in all such cases, man calls the *effect*, is no other than the principle itself rendered perceptible to the senses.

Since, then, man cannot make principles, from whence did he gain a knowledge of them, so as to be able to apply them not only to things on earth, but to ascertain the motion of bodies so immensely distant from him as all the heavenly bodies are? From whence, I ask, *could* he gain that knowledge but from the study of the true theology?

It is the structure of the universe that has taught this knowledge to man. That structure is an ever-existing exhibition of every principle upon which every part of mathematical science is founded. The offspring of this science is mechanics; for mechanics is no other than the principles of science applied practically. The man who proportions the several parts of a mill uses the same scientific principles as if he had the power of constructing a universe; but as he cannot give to matter that invisible agency by which all the component parts of the immense machine of the universe have influence upon each other and act in motional unison together without any apparent contact, and to which man has given the name of attraction, gravitation, and repulsion, he supplies the place of that agency by the humble imitation of teeth and cogs. All the parts of man's microcosm must visibly touch; but could he gain a knowledge of that agency so as to be able to supply it in practice, we might then say that another *canonical* book of the word of God had been discovered.

If man could alter the properties of the lever, so also could he alter the properties of the triangle; for a lever (taking that sort of lever which is called a steel-yard, for the sake of explanation) forms, when in motion, a triangle. The line it descends from (one point of that line being in the fulcrum), the line it descends to, and the chord of the arc which the end of the lever describes in the air, are the three sides of a triangle. The other arm of the lever describes also a triangle; and the corresponding sides of those two triangles, calculated scientifically or measured geometrically, and also the sines, tangents, and secants

generated from the angles and geometrically measured, have the same proportions to each other as the different weights have that will balance each other on the lever, leaving the weight of the lever out of the case.

It may also be said that man can make a wheel and axis; that he can put wheels of different magnitudes together and produce a mill. Still the case comes back to the same point, which is that he did not make the principle that gives the wheels those powers. That principle is as unalterable as in the former cases, or rather it is the same principle under a different appearance to the eye.

The power that two wheels of different magnitudes have upon each other is in the same proportion as if the semi-diameters of the two wheels were joined together and made into that kind of lever I have described, suspended at the part where the semi-diameters join; for the two wheels, scientifically considered, are no other than the two circles generated by the motion of the compound lever.

It is from the study of the true theology that all our knowledge of science is derived, and it is from that knowledge that all the arts have originated.

The Almighty lecturer, by displaying the principles of science in the structure of the universe, has invited man to study and to imitation. It is as if he had said

to the inhabitants of this globe that we call ours: "I rendered the starry heavens visible, to teach him science and the arts. He can now provide for his own comfort, AND LEARN FROM MY MUNIFICENCE TO BE KIND TO EACH OTHER."

Of what use is it, unless it be to teach man something, that his eye is endowed with the power of beholding to an incomprehensible distance an immensity of worlds revolving in the ocean of space? Of what use is it that this immensity of worlds is visible to man? What has man to do with the Pleiades, with Orion, with Sirius, with the star he calls the North star, with the moving orbs he has named Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Venus, and Mercury, if no uses are to follow from their being visible? A less power of vision would have been sufficient for man, if the immensity he now possesses were only given to waste itself, as it were, on an immense desert space glittering with shows.

It is only by contemplating what he calls the starry heavens as the book and school of science that he discovers any use in their being visible to him, or any advantage resulting from his immensity of vision. But when he contemplates the subject in this light, he sees an additional motive for saying that *nothing was made in vain*; for in vain would be this power of vision if it taught man nothing. . . .

## PHILIP FRENEAU (1752-1832)

The title-makers have done so well by Philip Freneau that he passes today as (1) poet of the American Revolution, (2) journalist of Jeffersonian and French Democracy, (3) apostle of the Religion of Nature and Humanity, and (4) the father of American poetry. Aside from the fact that he merits these fine titles, they are important as indicating the wide range of his interests and as suggesting that, like other writers of his day, the times made him a propagandist first and a poet afterwards. Like Trumbull, Dwight, and Barlow, or David Humphreys, Lemuel Hopkins, and Francis Hopkinson, he lived in an age of political and social turmoil, and like them, he could not avoid the burning issues of the day. Three-fourths of his energy went into crusading, and only a fourth was available for the cultivation of the purer poetic vein.

Born of French Huguenot parents in New York on January 2, 1752, he enjoyed the advantages of a genteel rearing and a good education; for when the boy was ten, his father inherited an estate at Mount Pleasant, New Jersey, of a thousand acres, spacious buildings, and slaves. When Freneau entered Princeton in his sixteenth year, his knowledge of the English poets and the classics elicited a letter of congratulation from President Witherspoon.

Like the Hartford Wits at Yale, Freneau and his Princeton friends, who included Henry Hugh Brackenridge, Aaron Burr, Henry Lee, William Bradford, Henry B. Livingston, and his roommate James Madison, set themselves to cultivating polite letters. Like them, too, they turned rather too much toward the exotic and the grandiloquent, choosing historical subjects of the antique world or the epical themes of Holy Writ.

During his freshman year Freneau wrote a lengthy poem in well-turned rhymed pentameters on the discouraging subject, "The Prophet Jonah," followed the next year by a dramatic fragment in blank verse on "The Pyramids of Egypt." With Brackenridge he wrote several chapters of an unfinished, fantastic novel entitled *Father Bombo's Pilgrimage to Mecca in Arabia*. But, as at Yale, liberal, not to say deistic, currents were coming into vogue among the students

at Princeton. Freneau's "Power of Fancy," written in 1770 and reminiscent of Miltonic phrasology, reflects not only incipient romantic characteristics of fanciful figurativeness and musical elasticity of form but also Freneau's early deistic faith in nature as a divine revelation, by which the planets, suns, moons, and stars are regarded as—

But thoughts on reason's scale combin'd,  
Ideas of the Almighty mind!

Again, as on other college campuses of the day, the political opinions current among the students reflected the rising tide of colonial opposition to British measures, and Princeton especially acquired the reputation of being a "hotbed of Whiggism." In a letter written in 1770, Madison described a vivid night scene in the college yard where students, robed in black gowns, burned, amid the tolling of bells, the letters of merchants who had failed to keep their non-importation agreements. The Commencement poem on "The Rising Glory of America," in which Freneau and Brackenridge collaborated, is an expression of the same emerging spirit of independence and national self-consciousness that brought on the Revolution, and that inspired the epic flights of Trumbull and Dwight and the dramatic independence of Royall Tyler and William Dunlap.

Following his graduation in 1771, Freneau taught school on Long Island and in Maryland, and wrote poems like "The American Village" (in "rocking horse" Popean couplets), which was "damned by all good and judicious judges," but which foreshadows many of his poetic characteristics, such as his love for nature and for indigenous, rural themes, his kinship with Goldsmith, with "heav'nly Pope" and with "godlike Addison," as well as his scorn for luxury and civilization and his naturalistic glorification of primitive life and the noble savage.

In the summer of 1775 he appeared in New York to win fame through eight satirical verse pamphlets turning upon the battles of Lexington and Bunker Hill and the fate of Generals Gage and Howe, breathing defiance to British tyrants and marauders, and ending with the prayer:

*Libera Nos, Domine.*—Deliver us, O Lord, not only from British Dependence, but also,

. . . From a kingdom that bullies, and hectors, and swears,  
We send up to heaven our wishes and prayers  
That we, disunited, may freemen be still,  
And Britain go on—to be damned if she will.

Antedating as these do the Declaration of Independence by a full year and the first version of Trumbull's hit in *M'Fingal* by six months, Freneau's satires did in verse what Paine's *Common Sense* did in prose.

This marks the beginning of Freneau's rebellious career as "a volunteer in two revolutions"—in which he was judged patriotic or seditious depending on whether he was with or against the victorious party. In 1776 he fought with Hamilton, John Adams, and Washington for national independence, and won high praise from them and all other patriots. But in the revolution of 1793, breaking with Hamilton, Adams, and Washington, he joined Jefferson in the fight to hold the advantages won in '76 against the forces of special privilege, aristocracy, and monarchy, which he and Jefferson believed to be threatening republicanism in America. For him it was no new cause, but merely a continuation of the old fight for democratic liberty and individual freedom; but in his former friends' eyes it allied him with Jeffersonian democrats, insubordinate levelers, and Jacobin radicals, and it brought upon him the odium attaching the Federalist mind to a vulgar democrat and a rascally infidel that threw an ugly shadow over his old age.

But during the earlier revolution he was an honored compatriot, although he spent most of the war years in the West Indies, where the exotic luxuriance of the land and the tropical atmosphere of the sea stirred his fancy to the writing of such poems as "The Jamaica Funeral," "The Beauties of Santa Cruz," and the weird "House of Night." On his second return trip in 1778 he was captured by the British but was set free after a short detention, and upon his arrival in America he published a belated poem, "America Independent," celebrating the Declaration of Independence and calling upon his countrymen to avenge the "hell-born spite" of British bondage. On a third voyage to the West Indies he was again captured, after a bloody fight between the American *Aurora* and the British *Irís*, an engagement in which he participated as a civilian. He was kept for a while on a British prison ship, the *Scorpion*, and later transferred to the *Hunter*, a hospital ship lying in New York harbor. The brutal treatment which he experienced

there drove him to that frenzied hatred of everything British as expressed in his poem on "The British Prison Ship," written just after his release, when he tells us he "came home round through the woods, for fear of terrifying the neighbors with my ghastly looks had I gone through Mount Pleasant." Henceforth he devoted himself to war propaganda, sharpening and letting fly his "best arrows at these hell-hounds," as he came to characterize the British. His "wrathful muse" breathed defiance and hatred, sarcasm and invective, in hundreds of poems that were widely circulated and read, as were Paine's *Crisis* papers, at army campfires and wherever else patriots gathered. From 1781 to 1784, while employed in the Philadelphia Post Office, he became the leading contributor, if not editor, of the *Freeman's Journal*, and published in its columns such well-known pacans as "The Memorable Victory" of Paul Jones and "To the Memory of the Brave Americans" who died at Eutaw Springs, while mercilessly ridiculing the British in "The Fall of General Earl Cornwallis" and in "The Political Balance."

The sea, for which he developed a fondness during his first trip to the West Indies, and which supplied him with some of his best images and motifs ever afterwards, called him again in 1784. He sailed the Atlantic and Caribbean as captain of a brig until 1790, when he married Eleanor Forman, of a distinguished family, and left the sea to become editor of the *New York Daily Advertiser*. A year later he was mentioned by Aedanus Burke to James Madison as "struggling under difficulties," whereupon Jefferson, then Secretary of State, appointed him to a clerkship in his department on August 16, 1791. Nine days later Freneau announced his intention of publishing the *National Gazette*. It appeared on October 31, 1791, and lasted until October 23, 1793.

The first number of the *National Gazette* praised Thomas Paine and the French Revolutionists, and succeeding issues left no doubt that Freneau's periodical was the organ of Jeffersonian views designed to counteract the *United States Gazette*, the partisan organ of the Hamiltonian party.

Ever distrustful of a plutocratic aristocracy and alarmed at the centralizing powers of the government which Hamilton was building up, Freneau, with Jefferson, fought with all the means at his command to combat Hamilton's measures in public as Jefferson opposed them in Washington's Cabinet. It was a "grim, unsparing, deadly" battle of ruthless partisanship in which nothing less than scurrilous lampoon and sledge-hammer invective served the purpose. Freneau's training in that department during the war

period had made him a master of intense attack, and the Federalists were soon smarting under his whip-lash, despite the able defense of Federalism as promulgated by John Fenno, the editor of the *United States Gazette*.

Hamilton early recognized that the chief business of the *National Gazette* was to destroy him, and he resolved on desperate measures. Blinking the fact that Fenno and the *United States Gazette* were subsidized by the government in the form of fat printing contracts many times more lucrative than the annual salary of \$250 which the Secretary of State paid Freneau as Clerk for Foreign Languages, he published an anonymous attack in Fenno's *Gazette* for July, 1792, charging Jefferson with having "hired" Freneau to "bite the hand that puts bread in his mouth" and of using the patronage of his Federal office to encourage an anti-government periodical. Freneau was hamstringing the Federalists at every turn, rousing popular opposition to the funding scheme, the bank, the excise, the tariff, the ceremonialism in high places, and the drift toward monarchical forms and practices. He publicized every known case where a Federalist had toasted the King of England, and he recorded numerous instances when they had spoken contemptuously of "the people." He supported the popular Jacobin demonstrations following the execution of Louis XVI, and in the Genêt affair, he defended Genêt, while reminding President Washington, since he was only a "public servant," he should remember that "the people are sovereign in the United States."

It was more than even Washington could bear. He sent for Jefferson and charged him with employing "that rascal Freneau" who had abused not only him but every branch of the government, adding (according to Jefferson's account), "By God, he had rather be in his grave than in his present situation." Jefferson refused to fire Freneau, for he believed that his paper "saved our Constitution, which was galloping fast into monarchy." The question of whether Freneau was actually employed by Jefferson is still being debated, but there is no longer any question about Freneau's being as effective as was Jefferson himself in arousing the popular opposition to Federalist measures that destroyed the party a few years later. But his partisanship also served to break Freneau. Championing the cause of democracy and the principles of French republicanism at a time when the reaction against the excesses of the French Revolution had provoked a strong revulsion of feeling among conservatives in America, Freneau also advocated lesser causes, among them deism, Unitarianism, hu-

manitarian reforms (notably antislavery), and Americanism in education; and these, as much as his partisanship for Jeffersonian democracy, brought down upon him the resentment of the powerful forces of conservatism. In the rough work that he engaged in, he forsook poetry to turn journalist and to heap abuse and scurrility upon the men whom he believed to be the enemies of the people. They retaliated in kind, calling him "a hirling mouthpiece of Jefferson," "a writer of wretched and insolent doggerel," "a vulgar democrat," and "a disseminator of insubordination and infidelity." Timothy Dwight lectured his boys at Yale that Philip Freneau was no better than Tom Paine—"a mere incendiary, or rather . . . a despicable tool of bigger incendiaries, and his paper . . . a public nuisance." Even the gentle Irving, who took his Federalism in moderate doses, spoke of him as "a barking cur"; while the saintlike Washington, forgetful of the time when Freneau had been more essential to his cause, seemed, to a people who adored him, to give everybody leave to dub Freneau "that rascal." From this heaping up of abuse, his name and fame did not recover until the dawn of the twentieth century.

When Jefferson, his patron, left Washington's Cabinet, Freneau resigned his secretaryship and gave up the *National Gazette*. Discredited and disgusted, he retired from "knaves and fools" to Mount Pleasant, now reduced to "a couple of hundred acres of an old sandy patrimony," to reflect that he had reposed his trust too blindly in the faith that the age of reason had already arrived, and that the overthrow of tyranny in government and religion would follow as soon as men were shown the way to do it.

For a year (1795-96) he edited the *Jersey Chronicle*, "a free, independent, republican paper," devoted to "the natural and political rights of nations." In June of 1795 he printed, with his own hands, his collected poems, the first edition to receive his own supervision, for the two earlier ones (1786 and 1788) had been printed by a friend while he was at sea. After various changes of work and residence, poverty drove him back to his old calling as master of coast-line freight vessels during 1803-1809. In 1809, back at Mount Pleasant, he prepared the 1809 edition of his poems, in two volumes. The War of 1812 revived his old rancor against the British, and he wrote another notable series of spirited satirical and patriotic poems. The burning of his old home in 1815, poverty, foreclosures and mortgages, and a weakness for "the tavern and the flowing bowl" completed his misery; and one night, just a week before the Christmas of 1832, while going home, the old man of eighty lost



his way in a snowstorm and was found the next morning dying of exposure.

Freneau's literary output falls roughly into three classes: (1) his patriotic and political satires, songs, and invectives; (2) his fanciful or imaginative verse, lyrical, descriptive, or reflective; and (3) his prose writings. The last have been too much neglected and remain still largely uncollected. During the course of his long and active career as a journalist, he wrote countless editorials, attacks, commentaries, reports, and essays of many kinds. Like his poems, these are uneven in composition and worth, often hastily written (as they had to be), and colored by the party spirit of the times. But in a number of his familiar essays, a form to which he especially devoted himself after his retirement from Washington, he achieved often a pleasing combination of sentiment, humor, and discernment. One of his most successful essays is his characterization of Tomo Cheeki as a commentator on the white man's way of life. Among the more personal of his familiar essays is "A Speech on a New Subject," presenting an unforgettable sketch of a retired sea captain; while among his essays commenting on the follies and foibles of human nature there are several that Addison could readily have accepted for the *Spectator*.

Freneau's later verse of propaganda—whether patriotic, political, or religious—suffered no diminution of forcefulness. His poetic fame during his own day rested almost wholly upon his polemical verse, and it is freely admitted that in that genre he excelled all of his contemporaries. His moralizing verses on matters of general philosophical import and his poems on natural or universal religion are all good in their way, several of the latter being little behind Alexander Pope's famous "Universal Prayer" in quality.

But it is upon what he called his "Poems of Romantic Fancy" that his more enduring fame as a poet must rest—poems like "The Power of Fancy," "The Beauties of Santa Cruz," "The Indian Burying Ground," and "The Wild Honey Suckle." In these, he is the poet of the transition between the old neo-classic conventionality and the new romantic imaginativeness. His fondness for moralizing, his rationalism, his addiction to the pastoral and the sentimental, and his use of personification and poetic diction ally him with the school of Gray, Collins, and Cowper, whose inspirations in some of his verses are not hard to discover. His youthful poem on "The Power of Fancy" appears to have derived at once from Milton's "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso" and from Joseph Warton's "Ode to Fancy"; while "The House of

Night" shows parallelisms with the "Induction" to *Mirror for Magistrates* no less than with the graveyard poetry of Blair and Gray, at the same time that it foreshadows the Gothic vein of Mrs. Radcliffe and Charles Brockden Brown or the funereal morbidity of Edgar Allan Poe. In his Indian poems he exhibits some similarities to the antiquaries and the primitivists of the late eighteenth and the early nineteenth centuries, and in his lighter, brighter lyrical mood he reminds the reader of Marvell and of Herrick. His perfect combination of the wistful mood of transience with a rich coloration of the beautiful forms of nature in "The Wild Honey Suckle" produce a really fine poetic expression that reaches a climax in the closing lines:

The space between, is but an hour,  
The frail duration of a flower.

Often his excellence lies in individual lines or short passages, of the kind typified by "The Indian Burying Ground":

The hunter still the deer pursues,  
The hunter and the deer, a shade!

He was to be followed by many American poets who possessed a surer touch, a finer taste, and a firmer power; but it is to his credit that he could, on occasion, turn aside from rancorous political factionalism to write verse that is of value as poetry, rather than for what it theologically preaches, historically illustrates, or politically argues. He realized that in the America of his day—

Low in the dust is genius laid,  
The muses with the man in trade;

for

An age employed in edging steel,  
Can no poetic raptures feel.

As a wit who might have learned to restrain his muse in a way to develop his best powers under the stimulation of sympathetic criticism and the friendly rivalry of fellow poets, he had cause to complain—

Thrice happy Dryden, who could meet  
Some rival bard in every street!  
When all were bent on writing well,  
It was some credit to excel.

In the America of his time there was not that incentive. Moreover, he had the misfortune in his later years to see younger men like Halleck, Drake, and especially Bryant, writing under more favorable circumstances, surpassing him in his own lifetime—a

fate that the novelist Brown and the dramatist Dunlap happily escaped.

Nevertheless, he cultivated his faculty for pure poetry in a degree to produce the first considerable

body of authentic verse in America and to make him, rather than Michael Wigglesworth or Edward Taylor or John Trumbull, the Father of American Poetry.

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*The Power of Fancy*<sup>1</sup>

Wakeful, vagrant, restless thing,  
Ever wandering on the wing,  
Who thy wondrous source can find,  
Fancy, regent of the mind;  
A spark from Jove's resplendent throne,  
But thy nature all unknown.

This spark of bright, celestial flame,  
From Jove's seraphic altar came,  
And hence alone in man we trace,  
Resemblance to the immortal race.

Ah! what is all this mighty whole,  
These suns and stars that round us roll!  
What are they all, where'er they shine,  
But Fancies of the Power Divine!  
What is this globe, these lands, and seas,

And heat, and cold, and flowers, and trees,  
And life, and death, and beast, and man,  
And time—that with the sun began—  
But thoughts on reason's scale combin'd,  
Ideas of the Almighty mind! <sup>2</sup>

20

On the surface of the brain  
Night after night she walks unseen,  
Noble fabrics doth she raise  
In the woods or on the seas,  
On some high, steep, pointed rock,  
Where the billows loudly knock  
And the dreary tempests sweep  
Clouds along the uncivil deep.

Lo! she walks upon the moon,  
Listens to the chimy tune  
Of the bright, harmonious spheres,<sup>3</sup>  
And the song of angels hears;  
Sees this earth a distant star,<sup>4</sup>  
Pendant, floating in the air;  
Leads me to some lonely dome,  
Where Religion loves to come,

30

<sup>1</sup> Freneau's apostrophe to fancy as the "vagrant, restless" spirit of poesy seeking, not the normal or universal, but rather the strange, exotic, and distant is a characteristic romantic attitude. The poem shows, besides romantic tendencies, influences from Freneau's acquaintance with Milton and Ossian; there are parallels with Joseph Warton's "Ode to Fancy" (1746); and lines 11-20 are obviously inspired by the current deistic view that divine revelation is to be sought in nature rather than in the Bible. One of the most striking features of the poem is its form. In rhymed tetrameters—alert, elastic, and full of music and motion—the poem discards the sing-song, artificial phraseology, and stilted movement common to American and English poetry at the time.

<sup>2</sup> Lines 11-20, and especially 19-20, are indicative of Freneau's deistic ideas.

<sup>3</sup> Lines 30-31 allude to the Ptolemaic system of the universe as a succession of concentric spheres.

<sup>4</sup> See Milton's *Paradise Lost*, II, 1052.

Where the bride of Jesus dwells,  
And the deep ton'd organ swells  
In notes with lofty anthems join'd,  
Notes that half distract the mind.

Now like lightning she descends  
To the prison of the fiends,  
Hears the rattling of their chains,  
Feels their never ceasing pains—  
But, O never may she tell  
Half the frightfulness of hell.

Now she views Arcadian <sup>5</sup> rocks,  
Where the shepherds guard their flocks,  
And, while yet her wings she spreads,  
Sees chrystal streams and coral beds,  
Wanders to some desert deep,  
Or some dark, enchanted steep.  
By the full moonlight doth shew  
Forests of a dusky blue,  
Where, upon some mossy bed,  
Innocence reclines her head.

Swift, she stretches o'er the seas  
To the far off Hebrides,<sup>6</sup>  
Canvas on the lofty mast  
Could not travel half so fast—  
Swifter than the eagle's flight  
Or instantaneous rays of light!  
Lo! contemplative she stands  
On Norwegia's rocky lands—  
Fickle Goddess, set me down  
Where the rugged winters frown  
Upon Orca's <sup>7</sup> howling steep,  
Nodding o'er the northern deep,  
Where the winds tumultuous roar,  
Vext that Ossian <sup>8</sup> sings no more.  
Fancy, to that land repair,  
Sweetest Ossian slumbers there;  
Waft me far to southern isles  
Where the soften'd winter smiles,  
To Bermuda's orange shades,  
Or Demarara's <sup>9</sup> lovely glades;  
Bear me o'er the sounding cape,  
Painting death in every shape,

<sup>5</sup> That is, pastoral. Arcadia was a mountainous area in ancient Greece.

<sup>6</sup> Islands off the coast of Scotland.

<sup>7</sup> Probably a reference to the Orchades or Orkney Islands to the north of Scotland.

<sup>8</sup> A legendary Gaelic poet, revived by James MacPherson (1736–1796).

<sup>9</sup> A country and a river in British Guiana.

Where daring Anson <sup>10</sup> spread the sail  
Shatter'd by the stormy gale—

80

Lo! she leads me wide and far,  
Sense can never follow her—  
40 Shape thy course o'er land and sea,  
Help me to keep pace with thee,  
Lead me to yon' chalky cliff,  
Over rock and over reef,  
Into Britain's fertile land,  
Stretching far her proud command.  
Look back and view, thro' many a year,  
Cæsar, Julius Cæsar, there.<sup>11</sup>

90

Now to Tempe's <sup>12</sup> verdant wood,  
50 Over the mid-ocean flood  
Lo! the islands of the sea—  
Sappho,<sup>13</sup> Lesbos mourns for thee:  
Greece, arouse thy humbled head,<sup>14</sup>  
Where are all thy mighty dead,  
Who states to endless ruin hurl'd  
And carried vengeance through the world?  
Troy, thy vanish'd pomp resume,  
Or, weeping at thy Hector's tomb,

100

Yet those faded scenes renew,  
60 Whose memory is to Homer due.  
Fancy, lead me wandering still  
Up to Ida's <sup>15</sup> cloud-topt hill;  
Not a laurel there doth grow  
But in vision thou shalt show,—  
Every sprig on Virgil's tomb  
Shall in livelier colours bloom,  
And every triumph Rome has seen  
Flourish on the years between.

110

Now she bears me far away  
70 In the east to meet the day,  
Leads me over Ganges' streams,  
Mother of the morning beams—  
O'er the ocean hath she ran,  
Places me on Tinian:<sup>16</sup>  
Farther, farther in the east,  
Till it almost meets the west,  
Let us wandering both be lost

<sup>10</sup> George Anson (1697–1762) led a British naval expedition to the South Pacific.

<sup>11</sup> That is, Britain, where Cæsar landed in 55 B.C.

<sup>12</sup> The valley of Thessaly.

<sup>13</sup> Sappho (fl. 630–570 B.C.), born in Lesbos, was the most famous of the women poets of the ancient world.

<sup>14</sup> Humbled because Greece was occupied by the Turks from 1715 to 1821.

<sup>15</sup> The gods watched battles around Troy from Mount Ida.

<sup>16</sup> Tinian, an island in the Mariana Islands.

On Taitis<sup>17</sup> sca-beat coast,  
 Bear me from that distant strand,  
 Over ocean, over land,  
 To California's golden shore—  
 Fancy, stop, and rove no more.

Now, tho' late, returning home,  
 Lead me to Belinda's<sup>18</sup> tomb;  
 Let me glide as well as you  
 Through the shroud and coffin too  
 And behold, a moment, there,  
 All that once was good and fair—  
 Who doth here so soundly sleep?  
 Shall we break this prison deep?—  
 Thunders cannot wake the maid,  
 Lightnings cannot pierce the shade,  
 And tho' wintry tempests roar,  
 Tempests shall disturb no more.

Yet must those eyes in darkness stay,  
 That once were rivals to the day?—

120 Like heaven's bright lamp beneath the main  
 They are but set to rise again. 140  
 Fancy, thou the muses' pride,  
 In thy painted realms reside  
 Endless images of things,  
 Fluttering each on golden wings,  
 Ideal objects, such a store,  
 The universe could hold no more:  
 Fancy, to thy power I owe  
 Half my happiness below;  
 130 By thee Elysian groves<sup>19</sup> were made,  
 Thine were the notes that Orpheus<sup>20</sup> play'd; 150  
 By thee was Pluto<sup>21</sup> charm'd so well  
 While rapture seiz'd the sons of hell—  
 Come, O come—perceiv'd by none,  
 You and I will walk alone.  
 1770 1786

### *The Prayer of Orpheus*<sup>22</sup>

Sad monarch of the world below,  
 Stern guardian of this drowsy shade,  
 Through these unlovely realms I go  
 To seek a captive thou hast made.  
 O'er Stygian waters have I pass'd,  
 Contemning Jove's unjust decree,  
 And reached thy sable court at last  
 To find my lost Eurydicè.

Of all the nymphs, so deckt and drest  
 Like Venus of the starry train.  
 She was the loveliest and the best,  
 The pride and glory of the plain.  
 O free from thy despotic sway  
 This nymph of heaven-descended charms,  
 Too soon she came this dusky way—  
 Restore thy captive to my arms.

<sup>17</sup> Tahiti.

<sup>18</sup> A conventional name in neoclassical verse.

<sup>19</sup> The blessed lived in Elysium, a land of eternal spring and happiness.

<sup>20</sup> Orpheus, celebrated mythical Greek poet.

<sup>21</sup> God of the underworld.

<sup>22</sup> Although Freneau's poems on fanciful and natural themes establish him as the first significant American romantic poet, a poem like "The Prayer of Orpheus" is evidence of the fact that

As by a stream's fair verdant side  
 In myrtle shades she rovd along.  
 A serpent stung my blooming bride,  
 This brightest of the female throng— 20  
 The venom hastening thro' her veins  
 Forbade the freezing blood to flow,  
 And thus she left the Thracian plains  
 For these dejected groves below.

Even thou may'st pity my sad pain,  
 Since Love, as ancient storics say,  
 Forced thee to leave thy native reign,  
 10 And in Sicilian meadows stray:  
 Bright Proserpine thy bosom fired,  
 For her you sought unwelcome light, 30  
 Madness and love in you conspired  
 To seize her to the shades of night.

But if, averse to my request,  
 The banished nymph, for whom I mourn,  
 Must in Plutonian chambers rest,  
 And never to my arms return—  
 Take Orpheus too—his warm desire

Freneau was not entirely emancipated from the poetic diction and the other conventionalities of the pseudo-classical poets.

Can ne'er be quench'd by your decree:  
In life or death he must admire,  
He must adore Eurydice.  
c. 1771

FROM

*The American Village*<sup>23</sup>

Where yonder stream divides the fertile plain,  
Made fertile by the labours of the swain;  
And hills and woods high tow'ring o'er the rest,  
Behold a village with fair plenty blest:  
Each year tall harvests crown the happy field;  
Each year the meads their stores of fragrance yield,  
And ev'ry joy and ev'ry bliss is there,  
And healthful labour crowns the flowing year.

Though *Goldsmith* weeps in melancholy strains,  
Deserted Auburn and forsaken plains,  
And mourns his village with a patriot sigh,  
And in that village sees Britannia die:  
Yet shall this land with rising pomp divine,  
In it's own splendour and Britannia's shine.  
O muse, forget to paint her ancient woes,  
Her Indian battles, or her Gallic foes;  
Resume the pleasures of the rural scene.  
Describe the village rising on the green,  
It's harmless people, born to small command,  
Lost in the bosom of this western land:  
So shall my verse run gentle as the floods,  
So answer all ye hills, and echo all ye woods;  
So glide ye streams in hollow channels pent,  
Forever wasting, yet not ever spent.  
Ye clust'ring boughs by hoary thickets borne!  
Ye fields high waving with eternal corn!

<sup>23</sup> Only the opening passages of this 450-line poem are here printed, but they are enough to illustrate the peculiar mixture of eighteenth-century convention and half-successful attempts to write simply, naturally, and realistically—at once reminiscent of the sentimentality of Goldsmith in *The Deserted Village* (1770) and of the realism of Crabbe in *The Village* (1783). The contrast between the decadence of English, and the promise of American, village life is an indication of Freneau's addiction to the program of literary nationalism, fostered by the poetic exercises in which he had indulged during his years at Princeton with his classmates Brackenridge, Madison, and Burr. Considering the relative excellence of Freneau's "Power of Fancy" written two years earlier, one is at a loss to explain the clichés, crudities of form, and uncertain grammatical constructions of "The American Village" (1772) except in terms of the "giddy wandering brain" mentioned in the letter which follows this selection. Reading between the lines of this letter to his former roommate, James Madison, one discovers enough indications of affectation and immaturity to account for the infelicities of "The American Village."

Ye woodland nymphs the tender tale rehearse,  
The fabled authors of immortal verse:  
Ye Dryads fair, attend the scene I love,  
And Heav'n shall centre in yon' blooming grove. 30  
What tho' thy woods, America, contain  
The howling forest, and the tiger's den,  
The dang'rous serpent, and the beast of prey,  
Men are more fierce, more terrible than they.  
No monster with it's vile contagious breath,  
No flying scorpion darting instant death;  
No pois'nous adder, burning to engage,  
Has half the venom or has half the rage.  
What tho' the Turk protests to heav'n his ire,  
With lift up hand amidst his realms of fire; 40  
And Russia's Empress her fleets afar,  
To aid the havoc of the burning war:  
Their rage dismays not, and their arms in vain,  
In dreadful fury bathe with blood the plain;  
Their terrors harmless, tho' their story heard,  
How this one conquer'd, or was nobly spar'd:  
Vain is their rage, to us their anger vain,  
The deep Atlantic raves and roars between.

To yonder village then will I descend,  
There spend my days, and there my ev'nings spend;  
Sweet haunts of peace whose mud' wall'd sides  
delight 51  
The rural mind beyond the city bright:  
Their tops with hazles or with alders wove,  
Remurmur magic to the neighb'ring grove;  
And each one lab'ring in his own employ,  
Comes weary home at night, but comes with joy:  
The soil which lay for many thousand years  
O'er run by woods, by thickets and by bears;  
Now reft of trees, admits the chearful light,  
And leaves long prospects to the piercing sight; 60  
Where once the lynx nocturnal sallies made,  
And the tall chestnut cast a dreadful shade:  
No more the panther stalks his bloody rounds,  
Nor bird of night her hateful note resounds;  
Nor howling wolves roar to the rising moon,  
As pale arose she o'er yon eastern down.  
Some prune their trees, a larger load to bear  
Of fruits nectarine blooming once a year:  
See groaning waggons to the village come  
Fill'd with the apple, apricot or plumb; 70  
And heavy beams suspended from a tree,  
'To press their juice against the winter's day:  
Or see the plough torn through the new made field

Ordain'd a harvest, yet unknown to yield.  
 The rising barn whose spacious floor receives  
 The welcome thousands of the wheaten sheaves,  
 And spreads it's arms to take the plenteous store,  
 Sufficient for its master and the poor:  
 For as Eumocus us'd his beggar guest  
 The great Ulysses in his tatters drest:  
 So here fair Charity puts forth her hand,  
 And pours her blessing o'er the grateful land:  
 No needy wretch the rags of winter fears,  
 Secure he sits and spends his aged years,  
 With thankful heart to gen'rous souls and kind,  
 That save him from the winter and the wind.

1772

### *Letter to James Madison*

Somerset County, in Maryland,  
 November 22, 1772.

If I am not wrongly informed by my memory, I have not seen you since last April, you may recollect I was then undertaking a School at Flatbush on Long Island. I did not [*sic*] enter upon the business it is certain and continued in it thirteen days—but—

"Long Island I have bid adieu,  
 With all its bruitish crew.  
 The youth of that detested place,  
 Are void of reason and of grace.  
 From Flushing hills to Flatbush plains,  
 Deep ignorance unrivalled reigns."

I am very poetical, but excuse it. "Si fama non venit ad aures,"<sup>24</sup>—if you have not heard the rumour of this story (which, by the by is told in various taverns and eating houses) you must allow me to be a little prolix with it. Those who employed me were some gentlemen of New York, some of them are bullies, some merchants, and others Scoundrels: They sent me eight children, the oldest of whom was 10 years. 40 Some could read, others spell and a few stammer over a chapter of the Bible—these were my pupils and over these was I to preside. My salary moreover was £40,—there is something else relating to that I shall not at present mention—after I forsook them they proscribed me for four days and swore that if I was caught in New York they would either Trounce or Maim me: but I luckily escaped with my goods

<sup>24</sup> "If the report has not come to your ears." Virgil.

to Princetown—where I remained till commencement—so much for this affair.

I have printed a poem in New York called the American Village, containing about 450 Lines, also a few short pieces added; I would send you one if I had a proper opportunity—the additional poems are —"A Poem to the Nymph I never saw—The miserable Life of a Pedagogue—and Stanzas on an ancient Dutch house on Long Island—As to the main poem 10 it is damned by all good and judicious judges—my name is in the title page, this is called vanity by some—but "who so fond as youthful bards of fame?"

I arrived at this Somerset Academy the 18th of October, and intend to remain here till next October. I am assistant to Mr. Bra[c]kenridge.<sup>25</sup> This is the last time I shall enter into such business; it worries me to death and by no means suits my "giddy wandering brain." I would go over for the gown this 20 time two years, but the old hag Necessity has got such a prodigious grip of me that I fear I shall never be able to accomplish it. I believe if I cannot make this out I must turn quack, and indeed I am now reading Physic at my leisure hours, that is, when I am neither sleeping, hearing classes, or writing Poetry—for these three take up all my time.<sup>26</sup>

It is now late at night, not an hour ago I finished a little poem of about 400 lines, entitled a Journey to Maryland—being the Sum of my adventures—it begins 30 "From that fam'd town where Hudson's flood— unites with Stream perhaps as good; Muse has your bard begun to roam—& I intend to write a terrible Satire upon certain vicious persons of quality in New York—who have also used me ill—and print it next fall it shall contain 5 or 600 lines. Sometimes I write pastorals to shew my Wit.

"Deep to the woods I sing a Shepherd's care,  
 Deep to the woods, Cylenus calls me there,  
 The last retreat of Love and Verse I go,  
 Verse made me mad at first and—will keep me so."

I should have been glad to have heard from you before now; while I was in college I had but a short

<sup>25</sup> Henry Hugh Brackenridge, with whom he had collaborated at Princeton in the writing of their Commencement poem on "The Rising Glory of America."

<sup>26</sup> This passage indicates that young Freneau was pretty much at loose ends, so to speak; that he had ambitions, without quite knowing to what ends or how best to achieve them; and that he probably suffered also from *Wanderlust*—soon to be gratified by his several trips to the West Indies.

participation of your agreeable friendship, and the few persons I converse with and yet fewer, whose conversation I delight in, make me regret the Loss of it. I have met with a variety of rebuffs this year, which I forbear to mention, I look like an unmeaning Teague<sup>27</sup> just turn'd out of the hold of an Irish Ship coming down hither I met with a rare adventure at Annapolis. I was destitute even of a brass farthing. I got clear very handsomely.

Could one expect ever to see you again, if I travel 10 through Virginia I shall stop and talk with you a day or two. I shall be very glad to receive a letter from you if it can be conveniently forwarded—in short “Non sum qualis eram”<sup>28</sup> as Partridge says in Tom Jones<sup>29</sup>—My hair is grown like a mop, and I have a huge tuft of beard directly upon my chin—I want but five weeks of twenty-one years of age and already feel stiff with age—We have about 30 Students in this academy, who prey upon me like Leaches—“When shall I quit this whimpering pack, 20 and hide my head in acomack?”—Shall I leave them and go “Where Pokomokes long stream meandering flows —

Excuse this prodigious scrawl without stile or sense—I send this by Mr. Luther Martin who will forward it to Col. Lee—and he to you I hope. Mr. Martin lives in Acomack in Virginia this side the bay. Farewell and be persuaded I remain your

truly humble Serv't and friend

P. H. F-r-e-n-e-a-u-

FROM

### *The Pictures of Columbus, the Genoese*<sup>30</sup>

PICTURE XVII

#### Columbus in Chains

Are these the honours they reserve for me,  
Chains for the man that gave new worlds to Spain!

<sup>27</sup> A very early and therefore interesting reference to Teague O'Regan, the jog-trotting, prosaic country yokel who attends Captain Farrago in those adventures that Brackenridge related in *Modern Chivalry*, an American *Don Quixote*, the first installment of which appeared in 1793.

<sup>28</sup> “I am not what I was.” Horace.

<sup>29</sup> Henry Fielding's novel, *The History of Tom Jones, a Foundling* (1749).

<sup>30</sup> These last two Idyls or Pictures from the dramatic life of Columbus (written 1774) illustrate Freneau at his best and worst. The restraint and inevitability of expression in some of his conceptions are counterbalanced by the trite grandiloquence of others. The text follows the edition of 1788.

Rest here, my swelling heart!—O kings, O queens,  
Patrons of monsters,<sup>31</sup> and their progeny,  
Authors of wrong, and slaves of fortune merely!  
Why was I seated by my prince's side,  
Honour'd, caress'd like some first peer of Spain?  
Was it that I might fall most suddenly  
From honour's summit to the sink of scandal!  
'Tis done, 'tis done!—what madness is ambition! 10  
What is there in that little breath of men,  
Which they call *fame*, that should induce the brave  
To forfeit ease and that domestic bliss  
Which is the lot of happy ignorance,  
Less glorious aims, and dull humility.—  
Whoc'er thou art that shalt aspire to honour,  
And on the strength and vigour of the mind  
Vainly depending, court a monarch's favour,  
Pointing the way to vast extended empire;  
First count your pay to be ingratitude, 20  
Then chains and prisons, and disgrace like mine!  
Each wretched pilot now shall spread his sails,  
And treading in my footsteps, hail new worlds,  
Which, but for me, had still been empty visions.

PICTURE XVIII

#### Columbus at Valladolid<sup>32</sup>

1

How sweet is sleep, when gain'd by length of toil!  
No dreams disturb the slumbers of the dead—  
To snatch existence from this scanty soil,  
Were these the hopes deceitful fancy bred;  
And were her painted pageants nothing more  
Than this life's phantoms by delusion led?

2

'The winds blow high: one other world remains;  
Once more without a guide I find the way;  
In the dark tomb to slumber with my chains—  
Prais'd by no poet on my funeral day, 10  
Nor even allow'd one dearly purchas'd claim—  
My new found world not honour'd with my name.

<sup>31</sup> During his third voyage, while in San Domingo, such unjust representations were made of his conduct to the Court of Spain, that a new admiral, Bovadilla, was appointed to supersede him, who sent Columbus home in chains. [Freneau's note.]

<sup>32</sup> After he found himself in disgrace with the Court of Spain, he retired to Valladolid, a town in Old Castile, where he died, it is said, more of a broken heart than of any other disease, on the 20th of May, 1506. [Freneau's note.]

3

Yet, in this joyless gloom while I repose,  
Some comfort will attend my pensive shade,  
When memory paints, and golden fancy shows  
My toils rewarded, and my woes repaid;  
When empires rise where lonely forests grew,  
Where Freedom shall her generous plans pursue.

4

To shadowy forms, and ghosts and sleepy things,  
Columbus, now with dauntless heart repair; 20  
You liv'd to find new worlds for thankless kings,  
Write this upon my tomb—yes—tell it there—  
Tell of those chains that sullied all my glory—  
Not mine, but their's—ah, tell the shameful story.  
1774 1788

### *A Political Litany*<sup>33</sup>

*Libera Nos, Domine.*—DELIVER US O LORD, not only  
from British Dependence, but also,

From a junto that labour with absolute power,  
Whose schemes disappointed have made them look  
sour,  
From the lords of the council, who fight against freedom,  
Who still follow on where delusion shall lead them.

From the group at St. James's, who slight our  
petitions,  
And fools that are waiting for further submissions—  
From a nation whose manners are rough and severe,  
From scoundrels and rascals,—do keep us all clear.

From pirates sent out by command of the king  
To murder and plunder, but never to swing; 10  
From *Wallace* and *Greaves*, and *Vipers* and *Roses*,\*  
Who, if heaven pleases, we'll give bloody noses.

From the valiant *Dunmore*, with his crew of banditti,  
Who plunder Virginians at Williamsburg city,  
From hot-headed *Montague*, mighty to swear,  
The little fat man, with his pretty white hair.

\* Captains and ships in the British navy, then employed on the American coast.

<sup>33</sup> This concluding prayer to the five verse satires against the British, all written in New York during the summer of 1775, is characteristic of Freneau's sharpening of his satiric pen, and signalizes the beginning of his life-long hatred of the British.

From bishops in Britain, who butchers are grown,  
From slaves, that would die for a smile from the  
throne,  
From assemblies that vote against *Congress proceedings*,  
(Who now see the fruit of their stupid mislead-  
ings.) 20

From *Tryon* the mighty, who flies from our city,  
And swelled with importance disdains the committee:  
(But since he is pleased to proclaim us his foes,  
What the devil care we where the devil he goes.)

From the caitiff, lord *North*, who would bind us in  
chains,  
From a royal king *Log*, with his tooth-full of brains,  
Who dreams, and is certain (when taking a nap)  
He has conquered our lands, as they lay on his map.

From a kingdom that bullics, and hectors, and swears,  
We send up to heaven our wishes and prayers, 30  
That we, disunited, may freemen be still,  
And Britain go on—to be damned if she will.

*New York, June 1775*

### *The Northern Soldier*

Ours not to sleep in shady bowers,  
When frosts are chilling all the plain,  
And nights are cold and long the hours  
To check the ardor of the swain,  
Who parting from his cheerful fire  
All comforts doth forego,  
And here and there  
And everywhere  
Pursues the prowling foe.

But we must sleep in frost and snows, 10  
No season shuts up our campaign;  
Hard as the oaks, we dare oppose  
The autumn's or the winter's reign.  
Alike to us the winds that blow  
In summer's season gay,  
Or those that rave  
On Hudson's wave  
And drift his ice away.

For Liberty, celestial maid,  
With joy all hardships we endure. 20  
In her blest smiles we are repaid,  
In her protection are secure.



Then rise superior to the foe,  
 Ye freeborn souls of fire;  
 Respect these arms,  
 'Tis freedom warms,  
 To noble deeds aspire.

Winter and death may change the scene,  
 The cold may freeze, the ball may kill,  
 And dire misfortunes intervene;  
 But freedom shall be potent still  
 To drive these Britons from our shore.  
 Who, cruel and unkind,  
 With slavish chain  
 Attempt in vain  
 Our freeborn limbs to bind.

1775

1775

FROM

*The Beauties of Santa Cruz* \*

Sick of thy northern glooms, come, shepherd, seek  
 More equal climes, and a serener sky:  
 Why shouldst thou toil amid thy frozen ground,  
 Where half year's snows, a barren prospect lie,

When thou mayst go where never frost was seen,  
 Or north-west winds with cutting fury blow,  
 Where never ice congealed the limpid stream,  
 Where never mountain tipt its head with snow?

Twice ten days prosperous gales thy barque shall bear  
 To isles that flourish in perpetual green,  
 Where richest herbage glads each fertile vale,  
 And ever verdant plants on every hill are seen.

Nor dread the dangers of the billowy deep,  
 Autumnal winds shall safely waft thee o'er;  
 Put off the timid heart, or, men unblest,  
 Ne'er shalt thou reach this gay enchanting shore.

\* Or St. Croix, a Danish island (in the American Archipelago), commonly, tho' erroneously, included in the cluster of the Virgin Islands; belonging to the crown of Denmark.

[Although a staunch patriot, Freneau was instinctively a man of peace, glad to spend the first years of the American Revolution in the West Indies. The poem is an expression of the romantic delight in exotic, semitropical luxuriance. Equally prominent in the poem is Freneau's humanitarian attitude toward slavery and the slave trade. His castigation of gold is analogous to the common eighteenth-century indictments of luxury and pride as the roots of all human evil.]

Cool, woodland streams from shaded cliffs descend,  
 The dripping rock no want of moisture knows,  
 Supplied by springs that on the skies depend,  
 That fountain feeding as the current flows. 20

Such were the isles which happy *Flaccus*<sup>34</sup> sung,  
 Where one tree blossoms while another bears,  
 Where spring forever gay, and every young,  
 Walks her gay round through her unceasing years.

Such were the climes which youthful Eden saw  
 Ere crossing fates destroyed her golden reign—  
 Reflect upon thy loss, unhappy man,  
 And seek the vales of *Paradise* again.

No lowering skies are here—the neighbouring sun  
 Clear and unveiled, his brilliant journey goes,  
 Each morn emerging from the ambient main,  
 And sinking there, each evening, to repose. 30

The native here, in golden plenty blest,  
 Bids from the soil the verdant harvests spring;  
 Feasts in the abundant dome, the joyous guest;  
 Time short,—life easy,—pleasure on the wing.

The smooth white cedar, here, delights the eye,  
 The bay-tree, with its aromatic green,  
 The sea-side grapes, sweet natives of the sand,  
 And pulse, of various kinds, on trees are seen. 40

Here mingled vines, their downward shadows cast,  
 Here, clustered grapes from loaded boughs depend,  
 Their leaves no frosts, their fruit no cold winds blast,  
 But, reared by suns, to time alone they bend.

The plantane and banana flourish here,  
 Of hasty growth, and love to fix their root  
 Where some soft stream of ambling water flows,  
 To yield full moisture to their clustered fruit.

On younger blue-browed hill, fresh harvests rise,  
 Where the dark tribe from Afric's sun burnt plain,  
 Oft o'er the ocean turn their wishful eyes  
 To isles remote high looming o'er the main. 50

And view soft seats of ease and fancied rest,  
 Their native groves new painted on the eye,  
 Where no proud misers thine gay hours molest,  
 No lordly despots pass, unsocial, by.

<sup>34</sup> Horace (Quintus Horatius Flaccus, 65 B.C.—8 B.C.), a Roman poet popular in the neoclassical age.

See, younder slave that slowly bends this way,  
 With years, and pain, and ceaseless toil oppress,  
 Though no complaining words his woes betray,  
 The eye dejected proves the heart distrest. 60

Perhaps in chains he left his native shore,  
 Perhaps he left a helpless offspring there,  
 Perhaps a wife, that he must see no more,  
 Perhaps a father, who his love did share.

Cursed be the ship that brought him o'er the main,  
 And cursed the men who from his country tore;  
 May she be stranded, ne'er to float again,  
 May they be shipwrecked on some hostile shore—

O gold accurst, of every ill the spring,  
 For thee compassion flies the darkened mind, 70  
 Reason's plain dictates no conviction bring,  
 And madness only sways all human kind.

O gold accurst! for thee we madly run,  
 With murderous hearts across the briny flood,  
 See foreign climes beneath a foreign sun,  
 And, there, exult to shed a brother's blood.

But thou, who ownest this sugar-bearing soil,  
 To whom no good the great FIRST CAUSE denies,  
 Let free-born hands attend thy sultry toil,  
 And fairer harvests to thy view shall rise, 80

The teeming earth will mightier stores disclose  
 Than ever struck thy longing eyes before,  
 And late content shall shed a soft repose,  
 Repose, so long a stranger at thy door.

To milder stars, and skies of clearer blue,  
 Sworn foe to tyrants, for a time repair:  
 And, till to mightier force proud Britain bends—  
 Despise her triumphs, and forget your care.

Soon shall the genius of the fertile soil  
 A new creation to thy view unfold— 90  
 Admire the works of Nature's magic hand,  
 But scorn that vulgar bait—the thirst for gold.—

Yet, if persuaded by no verse of mine,  
 You still admire your climes of frost and snow,  
 And pleased, prefer above these southern groves,  
 The darksome forests, that around you grow:

Still there remain—your native air enjoy,  
 Repel the TYRANT who thy peace invades:  
 While charmed, we trace the vales of SANTA CRUZ,  
 And paint with rapture, her inspiring shades. 100  
 1776 1779

### *The House of Night*<sup>35</sup>

#### A VISION

*Advertisement*—This Poem is founded upon the authority of Scripture, inasmuch as these sacred books assert, that *the last enemy that shall be conquered is Death*.<sup>36</sup> For the purposes of poetry he is here personified, and represented as on his dying bed. The scene is laid at a solitary palace, (the time midnight) which, tho' before beautiful and joyous, is now become sad and gloomy, as being the abode and receptacle of Death. Its owner, an amiable, majestic youth, who had lately lost a beloved consort, nevertheless with a noble philosophical fortitude and humanity, entertains him in a friendly manner, and by employing Physi-

cians, endeavours to restore him to health, altho' an enemy; convinced of the excellence and propriety of that divine precept, *If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink*.<sup>37</sup> He nevertheless, as if by a spirit of prophecy, informs this (fictitiously) wicked being of the certainty of his doom, and represents to him in a pathetic manner the vanity of his expectations, either of a reception into the abodes of the just, or continuing longer to make havock of mankind upon earth. The patient finding his end approaching, composes his epitaph, and orders it to be engraved on his tombstone, hinting to us thereby, that even Death and Distress have vanity; and would be remembered with honour after he is no more, altho' his whole life has been spent in deeds of devastation and murder. He dies at last in the utmost agonies of despair, after agreeing with an avaricious Undertaker to intomb his bones. This reflects upon the inhumanity of those men, who, not to mention an enemy, would scarcely cover a departed friend with a little dust, without certainty of reward for so doing. The

<sup>35</sup> This first important American poem on death and the grave had its predecessors in England in the poems of the "Graveyard School," and was followed, in turn, by the mortuary verse of Bryant, Poe, Whitman, and others.

Composed in the West Indies, this poem was first published in the *United States Magazine* for August, 1779, where it bore the sub-title, "Six Hours Lodging with Death, A Vision." This earliest edition of seventy-three stanzas was enlarged to one hundred thirty-six stanzas in the 1786 edition. The selections printed are from the text of 1786.

<sup>36</sup> See I Corinthians 15:26.

<sup>37</sup> See Romans 12:20.

circumstances of his funeral are then recited, and the visionary and fabulous part of the poem disappears. It concludes with a few reflexions on the impropriety of a too great attachment to the present life, and incentives to such moral virtue as may assist in conducting us to a better.

## 1

Trembling I write my dream, and recollect  
A fearful vision at the midnight hour;  
So late, Death o'er me spread his sable wings,  
Painted with fancies of malignant power!

## 2

Such was the dream the sage Chaldean<sup>38</sup> saw  
Disclos'd to him that felt heav'n's vengeful rod,  
Such was the ghost, who through deep silence cry'd,  
*Shall mortal man—be juster than his God?*

## 3

Let others draw from smiling skies their theme,  
And tell of climes that boast unfading light, 10  
I draw a darker scene, replete with gloom,  
I sing the horrors of the *House of Night*.

## 4

Stranger, believe the truth experience tells,  
Poetic dreams are of a finer cast  
Than those which o'er the sober brain diffus'd,  
Are but a repetition of some action past.

## 5

Fancy, I own thy power—when sunk in sleep,  
Thou play'st thy wild delusive part so well  
You lift me into immortality,  
Depict new heavens, or draw scenes of hell. 20

## 6

By some sad means, when Reason holds no sway,  
Lonely I rov'd at midnight o'er a plain  
Where murmuring streams and mingling rivers flow  
Far to their springs, or seek the sea again.

## 7

Sweet vernal May! tho' then thy woods in bloom  
Flourish'd, yet nought of this could Fancy see,  
No wild pinks bless'd the meads, no green the fields,  
And naked seem'd to stand each lifeless tree:

<sup>38</sup> See Job 4:17, where Eliphaz the Temanite tells Job of a vision in which the spirit asks, "Shall mortal man be more just than God?"

## 8

Dark was the sky, and not one friendly star  
Shone from the zenith or horizon, clear, 30  
Mist sate upon the woods, and darkness rode  
In her black chariot, with a wild career.

## 9

And from the woods the late resounding note  
Issued of the loquacious Whip-poor-will,\*  
Hoarse, howling dogs, and nightly roving wolves  
Clamour'd from far off cliffs invisible.

## 10

Rude, from the wide extended Chesapeake  
I heard the winds the dashing waves assail,  
And saw from far, by picturing fancy form'd,  
The black ship travelling through the noisy gale. 40

## 11

At last, by chance and guardian fancy led,  
I reach'd a noble dome, rais'd fair and high,  
And saw the light from upper windows flame,  
Presage of mirth and hospitality.

## 12

And by that light around the dome appear'd  
A mournful garden of autumnal hue,  
Its lately pleasing flowers all drooping stood  
Amidst high weeds that in rank plenty grew.

## 13

The Primrose there, the violet darkly blue,  
Daisies and fair Narcissus ceas'd to rise, 50  
Gay spotted pinks their charming bloom withdrew  
And Polyanthus<sup>39</sup> quench'd its thousand dyes.

## 14

No pleasant fruit or blossom gaily smil'd,  
Nought but unhappy plants or trees were seen,  
The yew,<sup>40</sup> the myrtle, and the church-yard elm,  
The cypress, with its melancholy green.

## 15

There cedars dark, the osier, and the pine,  
Shorn tamarisks, and weeping willows grew,

\* A bird peculiar to America, of a solitary nature, who never sings but in the night. Her note resembles the name given to her by the country people.

<sup>39</sup> A fragrant narcissus.

<sup>40</sup> The yew and the trees and plants that follow are traditional ones found in funereal or graveyard poetry.

The poplar tall, the lotos, and the lime,  
And pyracantha did her leaves renew.

16

The poppy there, companion to repose,  
Display'd her blossoms that began to fall,  
And here the purple amaranthus rose  
With mint strong-scented, for the funeral.

17

And here and there with laurel shrubs between  
A tombstone lay, inscrib'd with strains of woe,  
And stanzas sad, throughout the dismal green,  
Lamented for the dead that slept below.

18

Peace to this awful dome!—when strait I heard  
The voice of men in a secluded room,  
Much did they talk of death, and much of life,  
Of coffins, shrouds, and horrors of a tomb.

19

Pathetic were their words, and well they aim'd  
To explain the mystic paths of providence,  
Learn'd were they all, but there remain'd not I  
To hear the upshot of their conference.

20

Meantime from an adjoining chamber came  
Confused murrings, half distinguish'd sounds,  
And as I nearer drew, disputes arose  
Of surgery, and remedies for wounds.

21

Dull were their feuds, for they went on to talk  
Of *Anchylosis*, and the shoulder blade,  
Os *Femoris*, *Trochanters* \*—and whate'er  
Has been discuss'd by Cheselden or Meade: <sup>41</sup>

22

And often each, to prove his notion true  
Brought proofs from Galen or Hippocrates <sup>42</sup>—  
But fancy led me hence—and left them so,  
Firm at their points of hardy No and Yes.

\* *Anchylosis*—a morbid contraction of the joints. Os *Femoris*—the thigh bone. *Trochanters*—two processes in the upper part of the thigh bone, otherwise called *rotator major et minor*, in which the tendons of many muscles terminate.

<sup>41</sup> Two noted English physicians and authorities on anatomy.

23

Then up three winding stairs my feet were brought  
To a high chamber, hung with mourning sad, <sup>90</sup>  
The unsuff'd candles glar'd with visage dim,  
'Midst grief, in ecstacy of woe run mad.

24

A wide leaf'd table stood on either side,  
Well fraught with phials, half their liquids spent,  
And from a couch, behind the curtain's veil,  
I heard a hollow voice of loud lament.

25

Turning to view the object whence it came,  
My frighted eyes a horrid form survey'd;  
Fancy, I own thy power—Death on the couch,  
With fleshless limbs, at rueful length, was laid. <sup>100</sup>

26

And o'er his head flew jealousies and cares,  
Ghosts, imps, and half the black Tartarian crew, <sup>43</sup>  
Arch-angels damn'd, nor was their Prince remote,  
Borne on the vaporous wings of Stygian <sup>44</sup> dew.

27

Around his bed, by the dull flambeaux' glare,  
I saw pale phantoms—Rage to madness vent,  
Wan, wasting grief, and ever musing care,  
Distressful pain, and poverty perplex.

28

Sad was his countenance, if we can call  
That countenance, where only bones were seen <sup>110</sup>  
And eyes sunk in their sockets, dark and low,  
And teeth, that only show'd themselves to grin.

29

Reft was his scull of hair, and no fresh bloom  
Of chearful mirth sate on his visage hoar:  
Sometimes he rais'd his head, while deep-drawn  
groans  
Were mixt with words that did his fate deplore.

30

Oft did he wish to see the daylight spring,  
And often toward the window lean'd to hear,

<sup>42</sup> Greek physicians, long considered authorities.

<sup>43</sup> Occupants of Hades.

<sup>44</sup> From the River Styx, principal river of the underworld.

Fore-runner of the scarlet-mantled morn,  
The early note of wakeful Chanticleer.<sup>45</sup>

120

31

Thus he—But at my hand a portly youth  
Of comely countenance, began to tell,  
“That this was Death upon his dying bed,  
Sullen, morose, and peevish to be well;

32

“Fixt is his doom—the miscreant reigns no more  
The tyrant of the dying or the dead;  
This night concludes his all-consuming reign,  
Pour out, ye heav’ns, your vengeance on his head.

33

“But since my friend (said he), chance leads you  
here,  
With me this night upon the sick attend. 130  
You on this bed of death must watch, and I  
Will not be distant from the fretful fiend.”

34

“Before he made this lofty pile his home,  
In undisturb’d repose I sweetly slept,  
But when he came to this sequester’d dome  
’Twas then my troubles came, and then I wept:

35

“Twice three long nights, in this sad chamber, I,  
As though a brother languish’d in despair,  
Have tended faithful round his gloomy bed,  
Have been content to breathe this loathsome air. 140

36

“A while relieve the languors that I feel,  
Sleep’s magic forces close my weary eyes;  
Soft o’er my soul unwonted slumbers steal,  
Aid the weak patient till you see me rise.

37

“But let no slumbers on your eye-lids fall,  
That if he ask for powder or for pill  
You may be ready at the word to start,  
And still seem anxious to perform his will.

38

“The bleeding Saviour of a world undone  
Bade thy compassion rise toward thy foe; 150

<sup>45</sup> The name of the cock in the epic of *Reynard the Fox*; also in Chaucer’s *Nun’s Priest’s Tale*.

Then, stranger, for the sake of Mary’s son,  
Thy tears of pity on this wretch bestow.

39

“’Twas he that stole from our adoring arms  
*Aspasia*, she the loveliest of her kind,  
Lucretia’s virtue, with a Helen’s charms,  
Charms of the face, and beauties of the mind.

40

“The blushy cheek, the lively, beaming eye,  
The ruby lip, the flowing jetty hair,  
The stature tall, the aspect so divine,  
All beauty, you would think, had center’d there. 160

41

“Each future age her virtues shall extol,  
Nor the just tribute to her worth refuse;  
Fam’d, to the stars *URANIA* <sup>46</sup> bids her rise,  
Theme of the moral, and the tragic Muse.

42

“Sweet as the fragrance of the vernal morn,  
Nipt in its bloom this faded flower I see;  
The inspiring angel from that breast is gone,  
And life’s warm tide forever chill’d in thee!

43

“Such charms shall greet my longing soul no more,  
Her lively eyes are clos’d in endless shade, 170  
Torpid, she rests on yonder marble floor;  
Approach, and see what havoc DEATH has made.

44

“Yet, stranger, hold—her charms are so divine,  
Such tints of life still on her visage glow,  
That even in death this slumbering bride of mine  
May seize thy heart, and make thee wretched too.

45

“O shun the sight—forbid thy trembling hand  
From her pale face to raise the enshrouding lawn,—  
Death claims thy care, obey his stern command,  
Trim the dull tapers, for I see no dawn!” 180

46

So said, at Death’s left side I sat me down,  
The mourning youth toward his right reclin’d;  
Death in the middle lay, with all his groans,  
And much he toss’d and tumbled, sigh’d and pin’d.

<sup>46</sup> The muse of astronomy.

47

But now this man of hell toward me turn'd,  
And straight, in hideous tone, began to speak,  
Long held he sage discourse, but I forbore  
To answer him, much less his news to seek.

48

He talk'd of tomb-stones and of monuments,  
Of equinoxial climes and India shores, 190  
He talk'd of stars that shed their influence,  
Fevvers and plagues, and all their noxious stores.

49

He mention'd, too, the guileful *calenture*,\*  
Tempting the sailor on the deep sea main,  
That paints gay groves upon the ocean floor,  
Beckoning her victim to the faithless scene.

50

Much spoke he of the myrtle and the yew,  
Of ghosts that nightly walk the church-yard o'er,  
Of storms that through the wint'ry ocean blow  
And dash the well-mann'd galley on the shore, 200

51

Of broad-mouth'd cannon, and the thunderbolt,  
Of sieges and convulsions, dearth and fire,  
Of poisonous weeds—but seem'd to sneer at these  
Who by the laurel o'er him did aspire.

[The deleted stanzas, 52-102, continue the conversation between Death and the Youth, terminating (as the Advertisement indicates) in Death's composing his own epitaph.]

103

Scarce had he spoke, when on the lofty dome  
Rush'd from the clouds a hoarse resounding blast—  
Round the four caves so loud and sad it play'd  
As though all music were to breathe its last.

104

Warm was the gale, and such as travelers say  
Sport with the winds on Zaara's <sup>47</sup> barren waste; 210  
Black was the sky, a mourning carpet spread,  
Its azure blotted, and its stars o'ercast!

\* *Calenture*—an inflammatory fever, attended with a delirium, common in long voyages at sea, in which the diseased persons fancy the sea to be green fields and meadows, and, if they are not hindered, will leap overboard.

<sup>47</sup> Sahara's.

105

Lights in the air like burning stars were hurl'd,  
Dogs howl'd, heaven mutter'd, and the tempest blew,  
The red half-moon peeped from behind a cloud  
As if in dread the amazing scene to view.

106

The mournful trees that in the garden stood  
Bent to the tempest as it rush'd along,  
The elm, the myrtle, and the cypress sad  
More melancholy tun'd its bellowing song. 220

107

No more that elm its noble branches spread,  
The yew, the cypress, or the myrtle tree,  
Rent from the roots the tempest tore them down,  
And all the grove in wild confusion lay.

108

Yet, mindful of his dread command, I part  
Glad from the magic dome—nor found relief;  
Damps from the dead hung heavier round my heart,  
While sad remembrance rous'd her stores of grief.

109

O'er a dark field I held my dubious way  
Where Jack-a-lantern <sup>48</sup> walk'd his lonely round, 230  
Beneath my feet substantial darkness lay,  
And screams were heard from the distemper'd ground.

110

Not look'd I back, till to a far off wood,  
Trembling with fear, my weary feet had sped—  
Dark was the night, but at the enchanted dome  
I saw the infernal windows flaming red.

111

And from within the howls of Death I heard,  
Cursing the dismal night that gave him birth,  
Damning his ancient sire, and mother sin,  
Who at the gates of hell, accursed, brought him  
forth. <sup>49</sup> 240

112

(For fancy gave to my enraptur'd soul  
An eagle's eye, with keenest glance to see,  
And bade those distant sounds distinctly roll,  
Which, waking, never had affected me.)

<sup>48</sup> Jack-o'-lantern, a night watchman.

<sup>49</sup> See *Paradise Lost*, bk. II, 746 ff.

113

Oft his pale breast with cruel hand he smote,  
And tearing from his limbs a winding sheet,  
Roar'd to the black skies, while the woods around,  
As wicked as himself, his words repeat.

114

Thrice tow'rd the skies his meager arms he rear'd,  
Invok'd all hell, and thunders on his head, 250  
Bid light'nings fly, earth yawn, and tempests roar,  
And the sea wrap him in its oozy bed.

115

"My life for one cool draught!—O, fetch your  
springs,  
Can one unfeeling to my woes be found!  
No friendly visage comes to my relief,  
But ghosts impend, and spectres hover round.

116

"Though humbled now, dishearten'd and distrest,  
Yet, when admitted to the peaceful ground,  
With heroes, kings, and conquerors I shall rest,  
Shall sleep as safely, and perhaps as sound." 260

117

Dim burnt the lamp, and now the phantom Death  
Gave his last groans in horror and despair—  
"All hell demands me hence,"—he said, and threw  
The red lamp hissing through the midnight air.

118

Trembling, across the plain my course I held,  
And found the grave-yard, loitering through the  
gloom,  
And, in the midst, a hell-red, wandering light,  
Walking in fiery circles round the tomb.

119

Among the graves a spiry building stood,  
Whose tolling bell, resounding through the  
shade, 270  
Sung doleful ditties to the adjacent wood,  
And many a dismal drowsy thing it said.

120

This fabrick tall, with towers and chanceels grac'd,  
Was rais'd by sinners' hands, in ages fled;  
The roof they painted, and the beams they brac'd,  
And texts from scripture o'er the walls they spread:

121

But wicked were their hearts, for they refus'd  
To aid the helpless orphan, when distrest,  
The shivering, naked stranger they misus'd,  
And banish'd from their doors the starving guest. 280

122

By laws protected, cruel and profane,  
The poor man's ox <sup>50</sup> these monsters drove away;—  
And left Distress to attend her infant train,  
No friend to comfort, and no bread to stay.

123

But heaven look'd on with keen, resentful eye,  
And doom'd them to perdition and the grave,  
'That as they felt not for the wretch distrest,  
So heaven no pity on their souls would have.

124

In pride they rais'd this building tall and fair,  
Their hearts were on perpetual mischief bent, 290  
With pride they preach'd, and pride was in their  
prayer,  
With pride they were deceiv'd, and so to hell they  
went.

125

At distance far approaching to the tomb,  
By lamps and lanthorns guided through the shade,  
A coal-black chariot hurried through the gloom,  
Spectres attending, in black weeds array'd.

126

Whose woeful forms yet chill my soul with dread,  
Each wore a vest in Stygian chambers wove,  
Death's kindred all—Death's horses they bestrode,  
And gallop'd fiercely, as the chariot drove. 300

127

Each horrid face a grisly mask conceal'd,  
Their busy eyes shot terror to my soul  
As now and then, by the pale lanthorn's glare,  
I saw them for their parted friend condole.

128

Before the hearse Death's chaplain seem'd to go,  
Who strove to comfort, what he could, the dead;  
Talk'd much of Satan, and the land of woe,  
And many a chapter from the scriptures read.

<sup>50</sup> See Job 24:3.

129

At last he rais'd the swelling anthem high,  
In dismal numbers seem'd he to complain;  
The captive tribes that by Euphrates wept,<sup>51</sup> 310  
Their song was jovial to this dreary strain.

130

That done, they plac'd the carcase in the tomb,  
To dust and dull oblivion now resign'd,  
Then turn'd the chariot tow'rd the House of Night,  
Which soon flew off, and left no trace behind.

131

But as I stoop'd to write the appointed verse,  
Swifter than thought the airy scene decay'd;  
Blushing the morn arose, and from the east  
With her gay streams of light dispell'd the shade. 320

132

What is this Death, ye deep read sophists, say?—  
Death is no more than one unceasing change;  
New forms arise, while other forms decay,  
Yet all is Life throughout creation's range.

133

The towering Alps, the haughty Apennine,  
The Andes, wrapt in everlasting snow,  
The Apalachian and the Ararat  
Sooner or later must to ruin go.

134

Hills sink to plains, and man returns to dust,  
That dust supports a reptile or a flower; 330  
Each changeful atom by some other nurs'd  
Takes some new form, to perish in an hour.

135

Too nearly join'd to sickness, toils, and pains,  
(Perhaps for former crimes imprison'd here)  
True to itself the immortal soul remains,  
And seeks new mansions in the starry sphere.

136

When Nature bids thee from the world retire,  
With joy thy lodging leave, a fated guest;  
In Paradise, the land of thy desire,  
Existing always, always to be blest. 340

1779, 1786

### *On the Memorable Victory of Paul Jones*<sup>52</sup>

1

O'er the rough main with flowing sheet  
The guardian of a numerous fleet,  
    *Seraphis* from the Baltic came;  
A ship of less tremendous force  
Sail'd by her side the self-same course,  
    *Countess of Scarb'ro'* was her name.

2

And now their native coasts appear,  
Britannia's hills their summits rear  
    Above the German main;<sup>53</sup>  
Fond to suppose their dangers o'er, 10  
They southward coast along the shore,  
    Thy waters, gentle Thames, to gain.

<sup>51</sup> See Psalm 137.

<sup>52</sup> The full title, when the poem was first published in the *Freeman's Journal*, August 8, 1781, read "On the Memorable Victory, Obtained by the Gallant Captain Paul Jones, of *Le Bon Homme Richard*, (or Father Richard) over the *Seraphis*, of 44 Guns, under the Command of Captain Pearson."

Fought off Hull, England, September 23, 1779, this battle was the first important American naval victory. The text here printed follows that of the 1786 edition.

3

Full forty guns *Seraphis* bore,  
And *Scarb'ro's Countess* twenty-four,  
    Mann'd with Old England's boldest tars—  
What flag that rides the Gallic seas<sup>54</sup>  
Shall dare attack such piles as these,  
    Design'd for tumults and for wars!

4

Now from the top-mast's giddy height  
A seaman cry'd—"Four sail in sight  
    Approach with favouring gales;"  
Pearson, resolv'd to save the fleet, 10  
Stood off to sea these ships to meet,  
    And closely brac'd his shivering sails.

5

With him advanc'd the *Countess* bold,  
Like a black tar in wars grown old:

<sup>53</sup> The North Sea.

<sup>54</sup> The seas around France.



And now these floating piles drew nigh;  
But, muse, unfold what chief of fame  
In th' other warlike squadron came,  
Whose standards at his mast head fly.

6

Tw'as JONES, brave JONES, to battle led  
As bold a crew as ever bled  
Upon the sky-surrounded main;  
The standards of the Western World  
Were to the willing winds unfurl'd,  
Denying Britain's tyrant reign.

7

The *Good Man Richard* led the line;  
The *Alliance* next: with these combine  
The Gallic ship they *Pallas* call:  
The *Vengeance*, arm'd with sword and flame,  
These to attack the Britons came—  
But two<sup>55</sup> accomplish'd all.

8

Now Phœbus sought his pearly bed:  
But who can tell the scenes of dread,  
The horrors of that fatal night!  
Close up these floating castles came;  
The *Good Man Richard* bursts in flame;  
*Seraphis* trembled at the sight.

9

She felt the fury of her ball,  
Down, prostrate down, the Britons fall;  
The decks were strew'd with slain:  
JONES to the foe his vessel lash'd;  
And, while the black artillery flash'd,  
Loud thunders shook the main.

10

Alas! that mortals should employ  
Such murdering engines, to destroy  
That frame by heav'n so nicely join'd;  
Alas! that e'er the god decreed  
That brother should by brother bleed,  
And pour'd such madness in the mind.

11

But thou, brave JONES, no blame shalt bear,  
The rights of men demand thy care:  
For these you dare the greedy waves—  
<sup>55</sup> The *Bon-Homme Richard* and the *Pallas*.

No tyrant on destruction bent  
Has planned thy conquests—thou art sent  
To humble tyrants and their slaves.

30

12

See!—dread *Seraphis* flames again—  
And art thou, JONES, among the slain,  
And sunk to Neptune's caves below—  
He lives—though crowds around him fall,  
Still he, unhurt, survives them all;  
Almost alone he fights the foe.

70

13

And can thy ship these strokes sustain?  
Behold thy brave companions slain,  
All clasp'd in ocean's dark embrace.  
STRIKE, OR BE SUNK!—the Briton cries—  
SINK, IF YOU CAN!—the chief replies,  
Fierce lightnings blazing in his face.

40

14

Then to the side three guns he drew,  
(Almost deserted by his crew)  
And charg'd them deep with woe:  
By Pearson's flash he aim'd the balls;  
His main-mast totters, down it falls—  
Tremendous was the blow.

80

15

Pearson as yet disdain'd to yield,  
But scarce his secret fears conceal'd,  
And thus was heard to cry—  
"With hell, not mortals, I contend;  
What art thou—human, or a fiend,  
That dost my force defy?"

50

90

16

"Return, my lads, the fight renew!"  
So call'd bold Pearson to his crew;  
But call'd, alas! in vain;  
Some on the decks lay maim'd and dead;  
Some to their deep recesses fled,  
And more were bury'd in the main.

60

17

Distress'd, forsaken, and alone,  
He haul'd his tatter'd standard down,  
And yielded to his gallant foe;  
Bold *Pallas* soon the *Countess* took,

100

Thus both their haughty colours struck,  
Confessing what the brave can do.

18

But JONES, too dearly didst thou buy  
These ships possest so gloriously,  
Too many deaths disgrac'd the fray:  
Thy barque that bore the conquering flame,  
That the proud Briton overcame,  
Even she forsook thee on thy way.

19

For when the morn began to shine,  
Fatal to her, the ocean brine  
Pour'd through each spacious wound;  
Quick in the deep she disappear'd,  
But JONES to friendly Belgia steer'd,  
With conquest and with glory crown'd.

20

Go on, great man, to daunt the foe,  
And bid the haughty Britons know  
They to our *Thirteen Stars* shall bend;  
The *Stars* that veil'd in dark attire,  
Long glimmer'd with a feeble fire,  
But radiant now ascend;

120

21

Bend to the Stars that flaming rise  
In western, not in eastern, skies,  
Fair Freedom's reign restor'd.  
So when the magi,<sup>56</sup> come from far,  
Beheld the God-attending Star,  
They trembled and ador'd.

1787

1786

FROM

### *The British Prison Ship*

## CANTO II

The Prison Ship<sup>57</sup>

THE various horrors of these hulks to tell,  
These Prison Ships where pain and horror dwell,<sup>58</sup>  
Where death in tenfold vengeance holds his reign,  
And injur'd ghosts, yet unaveng'd, complain;  
This be my talk—ungenerous Britons, you  
Conspire to murder those you can't subduc.—

WEAK as I am, I'll try my strength to-day  
And my best arrows at these hell-hounds play,  
To future years one scene of death prolong,  
And hang them up to infamy, in song.

10

THAT Britain's rage should dye our plains with gore,  
And desolation spread through every shore,  
None e'er could doubt, that her ambition knew,  
This was to rage and disappointment due;  
But that those monsters whom our soil maintain'd,  
Who first drew breath in this devoted land,  
Like famish'd wolves, should on their country prey,  
Assist its foes, and wrest our lives away,

<sup>56</sup> See Matthew 1-2, 8-11.

<sup>57</sup> Written in 1780 and published in 1781, "The British Prison Ship" is in three cantos: (1) The Capture, (2) The Prison Ship, and (3) The Hospital Prison Ship. Canto II is given entire, after the edition of 1786.

<sup>58</sup> Based on personal experience, this poem presents evidence that Washington's repeated protests at such conditions were not unwarranted.

This shocks belief—and bids our soil disown  
Such friends, subservient to a bankrupt crown,  
By them the widow mourns her partner dead,  
Her mangled sons to darksome prisons led,  
By them—and hence my keenest sorrows rise,  
My friend, my guardian, my *Orestes*<sup>59</sup> dies;  
Still for that loss must wretched I complain,  
And sad *Ophelia* mourn her favourite swain.

20

AN! come the day when from this bloody shore  
Fate shall remove them to return no more—  
To scorch'd Bahama shall the traitors go  
With grief and rage, and unremitting woe,  
On burning sands to walk their painful round,  
And sigh through all the solitary ground,  
Where no gay flower their haggard eyes shall see,  
And find no shade but from the cypress tree.

30

So much we suffer'd from the tribe I hate,  
So near they shov'd me to the brink of fate,  
When two long months in these dark Hulks we lay  
Barr'd down by night, and fainting all the day  
In the fierce fervours of the solar beam,  
Cool'd by no breeze on Hudson's mountain-stream; 40  
That not unsung these threescore days shall fall  
To black oblivion that would cover all!—

<sup>59</sup> A legendary Greek character, son of Agamemnon and Clytemnestra, who was pursued by the Furies.

No masts or sails these crowded ships adorn,  
 Dismal to view, neglected and forlorn!  
 Here mighty ills oppress the imprison'd throng,  
 Dull were our slumbers, and our nights too long—  
 From morn to eve along the decks we lay  
 Scorch'd into fevers by the solar ray;  
 No friendly *awning* cast a welcome shade;  
 Once was it promis'd, and was never made;  
 No favours could these sons of death bestow;  
 'Twas endless cursing, and continual woe.  
 Immortal hatred doth their breasts engage,  
 And this lost empire swells their souls with rage.

two hulks on Hudson's stormy bosom lie,  
 Two, farther south, affront the pitying eye—  
 There the black *Scorpion* at her mooring rides,  
 There, *Strombolo* swings, yielding to the tides;  
 Here bulky *Jersey* fills a larger space,  
 And *Hunter*, to all hospitals disgrace—  
 Thou, *Scorpion*, fatal to the crowded throng,  
 Dire theme of horror and Plutonian song,  
 Requir'st my lay—thy sultry decks I know,  
 And all the torments that exist below!  
 The briny wave that Hudson's bosom fills  
 Drain'd through her bottom in a thousand rills.  
 Rotten and old, replete with sighs and groans,  
 Scarce on the waters she sustain'd her bones;  
 Here, doom'd to toil, or foundered in the tide,  
 At the moist pumps incessantly we ply'd,  
 Here, doom'd to starve, like famish'd dogs we tore  
 The scant allowance, that our tyrants bore.

REMEMBRANCE shudders at this scene of fears—  
 Still in my view some English brute appears,  
 Some base-born Hessian slave walks threat'ning by,  
 Some servile Scot, with murder in his eye  
 Still haunts my sight, as vainly they bemoan  
*Rebellions* manag'd so unlike their own!  
 O may I never feel the poignant pain  
 To live subjected to such fiends again,  
*Stewards* and *mates* that hostile Britain bore,  
 Cut from the gallows on their native shore,  
 Their ghastly looks and vengeance-beaming eyes  
 Still to my view in dismal colours rise—  
 O may I ne'er review these dire abodes,  
 These piles for slaughter, floating on the floods,—  
 And you that o'er the troubled ocean go,  
 Strike not your standards to this miscreant foe,  
 Better the greedy wave should swallow all,  
 Better to meet the death-conducted ball,  
 Better to sleep on ocean's deepest bed

At once destroy'd and number'd with the dead,  
 Than thus to perish in the face of day,  
 Where twice ten thousand deaths one death delay.

WHEN to the ocean dives the western sun,  
 And the scorch'd Tories fire their evening gun,  
 "Down, rebels, down!" the angry Scotchmen cry,  
 "Damn'd dogs, descend, or by our broadswords die!"

HAIL, dark abode! what can with thee compare—  
 Heat, sickness, famine, death, and stagnant air—  
 Pandora's box, from whence all mischief flew,  
 Here real found, torments mankind anew!—  
 Swift from the guarded decks we rush'd along,  
 And vainly sought repose, so vast our throng:  
 Three hundred wretches here, denied all light,  
 In crowded mansions pass the infernal night,  
 Some for a bed their tatter'd vestments join,  
 And some on chests, and some on floors recline;  
 Shut from the blessings of the evening air,  
 Pensive we lay with mingled corpses there,  
 Meagre and wan, and scorch'd with heat, below,  
 We loom'd like ghosts, ere death had made us so—  
 How could we else, where heat and hunger join'd  
 Thus to debase the body and the mind,  
 Where cruel thirst the parching throat invades,  
 Dries up the man, and fits him for the shades.

No waters laded from the bubbling spring  
 To these dire ships the British monsters bring—  
 By planks and ponderous beams completely wall'd  
 In vain for water, and in vain, I call'd—  
 No drop was granted to the midnight prayer,  
 To *Dives* in these regions of despair!—  
 The loathsome cask a deadly dose contains,  
 Its poison circling through the languid veins;  
 "Here, *generous* Britons, generous, as you say,  
 To my parch'd tongue one cooling drop convey,  
 Hell has no mischief like a thirsty throat,  
 Nor one tormentor like your David Sproat." \*

DULL flew the hours, till, from the East display'd,  
 Sweet morn dispells the horrors of the shade;  
 On every side dire objects meet the sight,  
 And pallid forms, and murders of the night,  
 The dead were past their pain, the living groan,  
 Nor dare to hope another morn their own;  
 But what to them is morn's delightful ray,  
 Sad and distressful as the close of day,  
 O'er distant streams appears the dewy green,  
 And leafy trees on mountain tops are seen,  
 But they no groves nor grassy mountains tread,

\* Commissary of Prisoners at New-York.

Mark'd for a longer journey to the dead. 140

BLACK as the clouds that shade St. Kilda's <sup>60</sup> shore,  
Wild as the winds that round her mountains roar,  
At every post some surly vagrant stands,  
Pick'd from the British or the Irish bands,  
Some slave from Hesse, some hangman's son at least  
Sold and transported, like his brother beast—  
Some miscreant Tory, puff'd with upstart pride,  
Led on by hell to take the royal side;  
Dispensing death triumphantly they stand,  
Their musquets ready to obey command; 150  
Wounds are their sport, as ruin is their aim:  
On their dark souls compassion had no claim,  
And discord only can their spirits please:  
Such were our tyrants, and such were these.

INGRATITUDE! no curse like thee is found  
Throughout this jarring world's extended round,  
Their hearts with malice to our country swell  
Because in former days we us'd them well—!  
This pierces deep, too deeply wounds the breast;  
We help'd them naked, friendless, and distressed, 160  
Receiv'd their vagrants with an open hand,  
Bestow'd them buildings, privilege, and land—  
Behold the change!—when angry Britain rose,  
These thankless tribes became our fiercest foes,  
By them devoted, plunder'd, and accurst  
Stung by the serpents whom ourselves had nurs'd.

BUT such a train of endless woes abound,  
So many mischiefs in these hulks are found,  
That on them all a poem to prolong  
Would swell too high the horrors of my song— 170  
Hunger and thirst to work our woe combine,

And mouldy bread, and flesh of rotten swine,  
The mangled carcase, and the batter'd brain,  
The doctor's poison, and the captain's cane,  
The soldier's musquet, and the steward's debt,  
The evening shackle, and the noon-day threat.

THAT juice destructive <sup>61</sup> to the pangs of care  
Which Rome of old, nor Athens could prepare,  
Which gains the day for many a modern chief  
When cool reflection yields a faint relief, 180  
That *charm*, whose virtue warms the world beside,  
Was by these tyrants to our use denied.

While yet they deign'd that healthy juice to lade,  
The putrid water felt its powerful aid;  
But when refus'd—to aggravate our pains—  
Then fevers rag'd and revel'd through our veins;  
Throughout my frame I felt its deadly heat,  
I felt my pulse with quicker motions beat;  
A pallid hue o'er every face was spread,  
Unusual pains attack'd the fainting head, 190  
No physic here, no doctor to assist;

My *name* was enter'd on the sick man's list;  
Twelve wretches more the same dark symptoms took,  
And these were enter'd on the doctor's book;  
The loathsome *Hunter* was our destin'd place,  
The *Hunter*, to all hospitals disgrace;  
With soldiers sent to guard us on our road,  
Joyful we left the *Scorpion's* dire abode;  
Some tears we shed for the remaining crew,  
Then curs'd the hulk, and from her sides with-  
drew. 200

1780 1781, 1786

### *To the Memory of the Brave Americans*

UNDER GENERAL GREENE, IN SOUTH CAROLINA,  
WHO FELL IN THE ACTION OF SEPTEMBER 8, 1781.

At Eutaw Springs the valiant died;  
Their limbs with dust are covered o'er—  
Weep on, ye springs, your tearful tide;  
How many heroes are no more!

If in this wreck of ruin, they  
Can yet be thought to claim a tear,

<sup>60</sup> An island of the outer Hebrides group, off the northwestern coast of Scotland.

O smite your gentle breast, and say  
The friends of freedom slumber here!

Thou, who shalt trace this bloody plain,  
If goodness rules thy generous breast, 10  
Sigh for the wasted rural reign;  
Sigh for the shepherds, sunk to rest!

Stranger, their humble graves adorn;  
You too may fall, and ask a tear;  
'Tis not the beauty of the morn  
That proves the evening shall be clear.—

<sup>61</sup> Rum.

They saw their injured country's woe;  
 The flaming town, the wasted field;  
 Then rushed to meet the insulting foe;  
 They took the spear—but left the shield.

Led by thy conquering genius, Greene,  
 The Britons they compelled to fly;  
 None distant viewed the fatal plain,  
 None grieved, in such a cause to die—

But, like the Parthian,<sup>62</sup> famed of old,  
 Who, flying, still their arrows threw,  
 These routed Britons, full as bold,  
 Retreated, and retreating slew.

Now rest in peace, our patriot band;  
 Though far from nature's limits thrown,  
 We trust they find a happier land,  
 A brighter sunshine of their own.

1781

1781

### To Lord Cornwallis<sup>63</sup>

AT YORK-VIRGINIA, OCTOBER 8. 1781.

HAIL, great destroyer (equall'd yet by none)  
 Of countries not thy master's, nor thine own;  
 Hatch'd by some demon on a stormy day,  
 Satan's best substitute to burn and slay;  
 Confin'd at last, hemm'd in by land and sea  
 Burgoyne himself was but a type of thee!

LIKE his, to freedom was thy deadly hate,  
 Like his thy baseness, and be his thy fate:  
 To you, like him, no prospect Nature yields  
 But ruin'd wastes and desolated fields—  
 In vain you raise the interposing wall,  
 And hoist those standards that, like you, must fall,  
 In you conclude the glories of your race,  
 Complete your monarch's, and your own disgrace.

10

WHAT has your lordship's pilfering arms attain'd?—  
 Vast stores of *plunder*, but no STATE regain'd—  
 That may return, though you perhaps may groan,  
 Restore it, ruffian, for 'tis not your own—  
 Then, lord and soldier, headlong to the brine  
 Rush down at once—the devil and the swine.

20

<sup>62</sup> The inhabitants of Parthia were a very warlike people, famed for their use of arrows in cavalry attacks.

<sup>63</sup> Poems like this and the longer diatribe "On the Fall of General Earl Cornwallis," celebrating his surrender to Washington on October 19, 1781, like Freneau's prose pamphlets, kept the patriot hatred and resentment of the British glowing. Text from the edition of 1786.

WOULDS'T thou at last with *Washington* engage,  
 Sad object of his pity, not his rage?

See, round thy posts now terribly advance  
 The chiefs, the armies, and the fleets of France,  
 Fight while you can, for warlike *Rochambeau*<sup>64</sup>  
 Aims at your head his last decisive blow,  
 Unnumber'd ghosts, from earth untimely sped,  
 Can take no rest till you, like them, are dead—  
 Then die, my Lord; that only chance remains  
 To wash away dishonourable stains,  
 For small advantage would your capture bring,  
 The *plundering servant of a bankrupt king*.

1781

1781, 1786

30

### The Vanity of Existence<sup>65</sup>

TO THYRSIS<sup>66</sup>

In youth, gay scenes attract our eyes,  
 And not suspecting their decay  
 Life's flowery fields before us rise,  
 Regardless of its winter day.

But vain pursuits, and joys as vain,  
 Convince us life is but a dream.  
 Death is to wake, to rise again  
 To that true life you best esteem.

So nightly on some shallow tide,  
 Oft have I seen a splendid show;  
 Reflected stars on either side,  
 And glittering moons were seen below.

10

But when the tide had ebb'd away,  
 The scene fantastic with it fled,  
 A bank of mud around me lay,  
 The sea-weed on the river's bed.

1781

1781

### The Dying Indian: Tomo-Chequi

"On yonder lake I spread the sail no more!  
 Vigour, and youth, and active days are past—  
 Relentless demons urge me to that shore  
 On whose black forests all the dead are cast:—

<sup>64</sup> Jean Baptiste Donatien de Vimeur, Count Rochambeau (1725–1807), a French general in America in 1780.

<sup>65</sup> While Freneau frequently returned to the pastoral vein, his later examples in that genre often forsake, as in the concluding stanza of this poem, the fastidious elegance of the conventional pastoral for a harsh realism betokening disillusionment.

<sup>66</sup> Conventional name taken over from classical pastoral poetry.

Ye solemn train, prepare the funeral song,  
For I must go to shades below,  
Where all is strange and all is new;  
Companion to the airy throng!—

What solitary streams  
In dull and dreary dreams,  
All melancholy, must I rove along!

To what strange lands must *Chequi* take his way!  
Groves of the dead departed mortals trace:  
No deer along these gloomy forests stray,  
No huntsmen there take pleasure in the chase,  
But all are empty unsubstantial shades,  
That ramble through those visionary glades;  
No spongy fruits from verdant trees depend,  
But sickly orchards there  
Do fruits as sickly bear,  
And apples a consumptive visage shew,  
And withered hangs the hurtle-berry blue.

Ah me! what mischiefs on the dead attend!  
Wandering a stranger to the shores below,  
Where shall I brook or real fountain find?  
Lazy and sad deluding waters flow—  
Such is the picture in my boding mind!  
Fine tales, indeed, they tell  
Of shades and purling rills,  
Where our dead fathers dwell  
Beyond the western hills,  
But when did ghost return his state to shew;  
Or who can promise half the tale is true?

I too must be a fleeting ghost!—no more—  
None, none but shadows to those mansions go;  
I leave my woods, I leave the Huron shore,  
For emptier groves below!

Ye charming solitudes,  
Ye tall ascending woods,  
Ye glassy lakes and prattling streams,  
Whose aspect still was sweet,  
Whether the sun did greet.  
Or the pale moon embraced you with her beams—  
Adieu to all!

To all, that charmed me where I strayed,  
The winding stream, the dark sequestered shade;  
Adieu all triumphs here!  
Adieu the mountain's lofty swell,  
Adieu, thou verdant hill,  
And seas, and stars, and skies—farewell,  
For some remoter sphere!

Perplexed with doubts, and tortured with despair,  
Why so dejected at this hopeless sleep?  
Nature at last these ruins may repair,  
When fate's long dream is o'er, and she forgets to  
weep;  
10 Some real world once more may be assigned,  
Some new born mansion for the immortal mind!  
Farewell, sweet lake; farewell surrounding woods.  
To other groves, through midnight glooms, I stray,  
Beyond the mountains, and beyond the floods, 60  
Beyond the Huron bay!  
Prepare the hollow tomb, and place me low,  
My trusty bow and arrows by my side,  
The cheerful bottle and the venison store;  
For long the journey is that I must go,  
Without a partner, and without a guide."  
20 He spoke, and bid the attending mourners weep,  
Then closed his eyes, and sunk in endless sleep!  
1784 1784

### *The Hurricane* \*

Happy the man who, safe on shore,  
Now trims, at home, his evening fire;  
Unmoved, he hears the tempests roar,  
That on the tufted groves expire:  
30 Alas! on us they doubly fall,  
Our feeble barque must bear them all.  
Now to their haunts the birds retreat,  
The squirrel seeks his hollow tree,  
Wolves in their shaded caverns meet,  
All, all are blest but wretched we— 10  
Foredoomed a stranger to repose,  
No rest the unsettled ocean knows.  
While o'er the dark abyss we roam,  
Perhaps, with last departing gleam,  
40 We saw the sun descend in gloom,  
No more to see his morning beam;  
But buried low, by far too deep,  
On coral beds, unpitied, sleep!  
But what strange uncoasted strand  
Is that, where fate permits no day— 20  
No charts have we to mark that land,  
No compass to direct that way—  
What *PILOT* shall explore that realm,  
What new *COLUMBUS* take the helm!

\* Near the east end of Jamaica, July 30, 1784.

While death and darkness both surround,  
And tempests rage with lawless power,  
Of friendship's voice I hear no sound,  
No comfort in this dreadful hour—  
What friendship can in tempests be,  
What comforts on this raging sea?

The barque, accustomed to obey,  
No more the trembling pilots guide:  
Alone she gropes her trackless way,  
While mountains burst on either side—  
Thus, skill and science both must fail;  
And ruin is the lot of all.

1784

1785

### *The Wild Honey Suckle*

Fair flower, that dost so comely grow,  
Hid in this silent, dull retreat,  
Untouched thy honied blossoms blow,  
Unseen thy little branches greet;  
No roving foot shall crush thee here,  
No busy hand provoke a tear.

By Nature's self in white arrayed,  
She bade thee shun the vulgar eye,  
And planted here the guardian shade,  
And sent soft waters murmuring by;  
Thus quietly thy summer goes,  
Thy days declining to repose.

Smit with those charms, that must decay,  
I grieve to see your future doom;  
They died—nor were those flowers more gay,  
The flowers that did in Eden bloom;  
Unpitying frosts, and Autumn's power  
Shall leave no vestige of this flower.

From morning suns and evening dews  
At first thy little being came:  
If nothing once, you nothing lose,  
For when you die you are the same;  
The space between, is but an hour,  
The frail duration of a flower.

1786

### *The Indian Burying Ground*

In spite of all the learned have said,  
I still my old opinion keep:

The posture, that we give the dead,  
Points out the soul's eternal sleep.

Not so the ancients of these lands—  
The Indian, when from life released,  
Again is seated with his friends,\*  
And shares again the joyous feast.

30

His imaged birds, and painted bowl,  
And venison, for a journey dressed,  
Bespeak the nature of the soul,  
Activity, that knows no rest.

10

His bow, for action ready bent,  
And arrows, with a head of stone,  
Can only mean that life is spent,  
And not the old ideas gone.

Thou, stranger, that shalt come this way,  
No fraud upon the dead commit—  
Observe the swelling turf, and say  
They do not lie, but here they sit.

20

Here still a lofty rock remains,  
On which the curious eye may trace  
(Now wasted, half, by wearing rains)  
The fancies of a ruder race.

10

Here still an aged elm aspires,  
Beneath whose far-projecting shade  
(And which the shepherd still admires)  
The children of the forest played!

There oft a restless Indian queen  
(Pale Shebah,<sup>67</sup> with her braided hair)  
And many a barbarous form is seen  
To chide the man that lingers there.

30

By midnight moons, o'er moistening dews;  
In habit for the chase arrayed,  
The hunter still the deer pursues,  
The hunter and the deer, a shade!

20

And long shall timorous fancy see  
The painted chief, and pointed spear.  
And Reason's self shall bow the knee  
To shadows and delusions here.

40

1788

\* The North Americans bury their dead in a sitting posture; decorating the corpse with wampum, the images of birds, quadrupeds, &c: And (if that of a warrior) with bows, arrows, tomahawks and other military weapons.

<sup>67</sup> For the Queen of Sheba see I Kings and II Chronicles.

*To an Author*

Your leaves bound up compact and fair  
 In neat array at length prepare  
 To pass their hour on learning's stage,  
 To meet the surly critic's rage;  
 The statesman's slight, the smatterer's sneer—  
 Were these, indeed, your only fear,  
 You might be tranquil and resigned:  
 What most should touch your fluttering mind  
 Is that few critics will be found  
 To sift your works, and deal the wound.

Thus, when one fleeting year is past  
 On some byc-shelf *your* book is cast—  
*Another* comes, with *something new*,  
 And drives you fairly out of view:  
 With some to praise, *but more to blame*,  
 The mind returns to—whence it came;  
 And some alive, who *scarce could read*  
 Will publish satires on the dead.

Thrice happy Dryden, who could meet  
 Some rival bard in every street!  
 When all were bent on writing well  
 It was some credit to excel!

Thrice happy Dryden, who could find  
 A *Milbourne* for his sport designed—  
 And *Pope*, who saw the harmless rage  
 Of *Dennis* bursting o'er his page,  
 Might justly spurn the *critic's aim*,  
 Who only helped to swell his fame.

On these bleak climes by Fortune thrown,  
 Where rigid *Reason* reigns alone,  
 Where lovely *Fancy* has no sway,  
 Nor magic forms about us play,  
 Nor nature takes her summer hue,  
 Tell me, what has the muse to do?

An age employed in edging steel  
 Can no poetic raptures feel;  
 No solitude's attracting power,  
 No leisure of the noonday hour,  
 No shaded stream, no quiet grove  
 Can this fantastic century move.

The muse of love in no request—  
 Go—try your fortune with the rest,  
*One* of the nine you should engage,  
 To meet the follies of the age.

On *one*, we fear, your choice must fall,  
 The least engaging of them all;  
 Her visage stern—an angry style—  
 A clouded brow—malicious smile—  
 A mind on *murdered victims* placed—  
 She, only she, can please the taste!

1788

*On Mr. Paine's Rights of Man*

10 Thus briefly sketched the sacred RIGHTS OF MAN,  
 How inconsistent with the ROYAL PLAN!  
 Which for itself exclusive honour craves,  
 Where some are masters born, and millions slaves.  
 With what contempt must every eye look down  
 On that base, childish bauble called a *crown*,  
 The gilded bait, that lures the crowd, to come,  
 Bow down their necks, and meet a slavish doom;  
 The source of half the miseries men endure,  
 The quack that kills them, while it seems to cure. 10

Roused by the REASON of his manly page,  
 20 Once more shall PAINE a listening world engage:  
 From Reason's source, a bold reform he brings,  
 In raising *mankind*, he pulls down *kings*,  
 Who, source of discord, patrons of all wrong,  
 On blood and murder have been fed too long:  
 Hid from the world, and tutored to be base,  
 The curse, the scourge, the ruin of our race,  
 Their's was the task, a dull designing few,  
 To shackle beings that they scarcely knew, 20  
 Who made this globe the residence of slaves,  
 And built their thrones on systems formed by knaves  
 30 —Advance, bright years, to work their final fall,  
 And haste the period that shall crush them all.

Who, that has read and scann'd the historic page  
 But glows, at every line, with kindling rage,  
 To see by them the rights of men aspersed  
 Freedom restrain'd, and Nature's law reversed,  
 Men, ranked with beasts, by monarchs will'd away,  
 And bound young fools, or madmen to obey: 30  
 Now driven to wars, and now oppressed at home,  
 Compelled in crowds o'er distant seas to roam,  
 From India's climes the plundered prize to bring  
 40 To glad the strumpet, or to glut the king.

COLUMBIA, hail! immortal be thy reign:  
 Without a king, we till the smiling plain;  
 Without a king, we trace the unbounded sea,  
 And traffic round the globe, through each degree;



Each foreign clime our honour'd flag reveres,  
 Which asks no monarch, to support the STARS: 40  
 Without a king, the laws maintain their sway,  
 While honour bids each generous heart obey.  
 Be ours the task the ambitious to restrain,  
 And this great lesson teach—that kings are vain;  
 That warring realms to certain ruin haste,  
 That kings subsist by war, and wars are waste:  
 So shall our nation, form'd on Virtue's plan,  
 Remain the guardian of the Rights of Man,  
 A vast Republic, famed through every clime,  
 Without a king, to see the end of time. 50  
 1792 1795

### To My Book <sup>68</sup>

Seven years are now elaps'd, dear rambling volume,  
 Since, to all knavish wights a foe,  
 I sent you forth to vex and gall 'em,  
 Or drive them to the shades below;  
 With spirit, still, of DEMOCRATIC proof,  
 And still despising Shylock's canker'd hoof:  
 What doom the fates intend, is hard to say,  
 Whether to live to some far-distant day,  
 Or sickening in your prime,  
 In this hard-hitting clime, 10  
 Take pet, make wings, say prayers, and flit away.  
 "Virtue, order and religion,  
 Haste, and seek some other region;  
 Your plan is laid, to hunt them down,  
 Destroy the mitre, rend the gown,  
 And that vile hag, Philosophy, restore"—  
 Did ever volume plan so much before?  
 For seven years past, a host of busy foes  
 Have buzz'd about your nose,  
 White, black, and grey, by night and day; 20  
 Garbling, lying, singing, sighing:  
 These eastern gales a cloud of insects bring  
 That fluttering, sniveling, whimpering—on the  
 wing—  
 And, wafted still as discord's demon guides,  
 Flock round the flame, that yet shall singe their hides.

<sup>68</sup> Text from the edition of 1795. When this poem was first printed in Freneau's *National Gazette*, on August 4, 1792, a note called attention to the following attack:

"The National Gazette is—the vehicle of party spleen and opposition to the great principles of order, virtue, and religion."—*Gaz. U. States*."

It is to be observed that in the second stanza, beginning "Virtue, order and religion," Freneau is paraphrasing Fenno's attack while ridiculing it.

Well!—let the fates decree whate'er they please:  
 Whether you're doomed to drink oblivion's cup,  
 Or Praise-God Barebones eats you up,  
 This I can say, you've spread your wings afar,  
 Hostile to garter, ribbon, crown, and star; 30  
 Still on the people's, still on Freedom's side,  
 With full-determin'd aim, to baffle every claim  
 Of well-born wights, that aim to mount and ride.  
 1792 1795

### To Shylock Ap-Shenkin <sup>69</sup>

Since the day I attempted to print a gazette,  
 This Shylock Ap-Shenkin does nothing but fret.  
 Now preaching and screeching, then nibbling and  
 scribbling,  
 Remarking and barking, and whining and pining,  
 And still in a pet,  
 From morning 'till night, with my humble gazette.  
 Instead of whole columns our page to abuse,  
 Your readers would rather be treated with News:  
 While wars are a-brewing, and kingdoms undoing,  
 While monarchs are falling, and princesses squalling,  
 While France is reforming,<sup>70</sup> and Irishmen  
 storming <sup>71</sup>— 10  
 In a glare of such splendour, what folly to fret  
 At so humble a thing as a poet's GAZETTE!  
 No favours I ask'd from your friend in the EAST:  
 On your wretched soup-meagre I left them to feast;  
 So many base lies you have sent them in print,  
 That scarcely a man at our paper will squint:—  
 And now you begin (with a grunt and a grin,  
 With the bray of an ass, and a visage of brass,  
 With a quill in your hand and a LIE in your mouth)  
 To play the same trick on the men of the SOUTH! 20  
 One printer for CONGRESS (some think) is enough,  
 To flatter, and lie, to palaver, and puff,  
 To preach up in favour of monarchs and titles,  
 And garters, and ribbands, to prey on our vitals:  
 Who knows but Pomposo <sup>72</sup> will give it in fee,  
 Or make mister Shenkin the Grand Patentee!!!

<sup>69</sup> The text printed follows that of 1795. The poem is a document in the war between Hamilton and Jefferson. This satirical poem is a reply to John Fenno's charge that Freneau was a hireling of Jefferson.

<sup>70</sup> A reference to the French Revolution.

<sup>71</sup> The Irish uprising from 1793–1798, spurred by French sympathy, was terminated by the Act of Union (with England) in 1800.

<sup>72</sup> Pomposo, a personification of "pompous," probably a reference to Hamilton.

Then take to your scrapers, ye Republican Papers,  
 No rogue shall go snacks—and the News-Paper Tax  
 Shall be puff'd to the skies, as a measure most wise—  
 So, a spaniel, when master is angry, and kicks it, 30  
 Sneaks up to his shoe, and submissively licks it.  
 1792 1795

*On the Anniversary of the Storming  
 of the Bastille, at Paris,  
 July 14, 1789*

The chiefs that bow to Capet's reign,  
 In mourning, now, their weeds display;  
 But we, that scorn a monarch's chain,  
 Combine to celebrate the day  
 To Freedom's birth that put the scal,  
 And laid in dust the proud Bastille.

To Gallia's rich and splendid crown,  
 This mighty Day gave such a blow  
 As Time's recording hand shall own  
 No former age had power to do: 10  
 No single gem some Brutus stole,  
 But instant ruin seiz'd the whole.

Now Tyrant's rise, once more to bind  
 In royal chains a nation freed—  
 Vain hope! for they, to death consign'd,  
 Shall soon, like perjur'd Louis bleed:  
 O'er every king, o'er every queen  
 Fate hangs the sword, and guillotine.

"Plung'd in a gulf of deep distress  
 France turns her back—(so traitors say) 20  
 Kings, priests, and nobles, round her press,  
 Resolv'd to seize their destin'd prey:  
 Thus Europe swears (in arms combin'd)  
 To Poland's doom is France consign'd."

Yet those, who now are thought so low  
 From conquests that were basely gain'd,  
 Shall rise tremendous from the blow  
 And free Two Worlds, that still are chain'd,  
 Restrict the Briton to his isle,  
 And Freedom plant in every soil. 30

Ye sons of this degenerate clime,  
 Haste, arm the barque, expand the sail;  
 Assist to speed that golden time  
 When Freedom rules, and monarchs fail;  
 All left to France—new powers may join,  
 And help to crush the cause divine.

Ah! while I write, dear France Allied,  
 My ardent wish I scarce restrain,  
 To throw these Sybil leaves aside,  
 And fly to join you on the main: 40  
 Unfurl the topsail for the chace  
 And help to crush the tyrant race!

1793

1795

*Ode*<sup>73</sup>

God save the Rights of Man!  
 Give us a heart to scan  
 Blessings so dear;  
 Let them be spread around  
 Wherever man is found,  
 And with the welcome sound  
 Ravish his ear.

Let us with France agree,  
 And bid the world be free,  
 While tyrants fall! 10  
 Let the rude savage host  
 Of their vast numbers boast—  
 Freedom's almighty trust  
 Laughs at them all!

Though hosts of slaves conspire  
 To quench fair Gallia's fire,  
 Still shall they fail:  
 Though traitors round her rise,  
 Leagu'd with her enemies,  
 To war each patriot flies, 20  
 And will prevail.

No more is valour's flame  
 Devoted to a name,  
 Taught to adore—  
 Soldiers of Liberty  
 Disdain to bow the knee,  
 But teach Equality  
 To every shore.

The world at last will join  
 To aid thy grand design, 30  
 Dear Liberty!  
 To Russia's frozen lands  
 The generous flame expands:  
 On Afric's burning sands  
 Shall man be free!

<sup>73</sup> This poem was sung at the Civic Feast in honor of Citizen Genêt in Philadelphia, June 1, 1793.

In this our western world  
 Be Freedom's flag unfurl'd  
 Through all its shores!  
 May no destructive blast  
 Our heaven of joy o'ercast,  
 May Freedom's fabric last  
 While time endures.

If e'er her cause require!—  
 Should tyrants e'er aspire  
 To aim their stroke,  
 May no proud despot daunt—  
 Should he his standard plant,  
 Freedom will never want  
 Her heart of oak!

1793

1795

### *The Creek Indian in Philadelphia*<sup>74</sup>

[TOMO CHEQUI'S SOLILOQUY]

As I travel through the streets and by-ways of this village, I never fail hearing the condition of my brethren and myself commiserated by the men and women of the place, on account of what they call our savage way of life, when at home.

We, in our turn, no less pity them for living cooped up in dark cages and narrow boxes, where they have scarcely room to turn or breathe, where the cheerful rays of the sun never yet penetrated but are concealed from the wretched inhabitant by walls of stupendous height and thickness.

The most unrelenting storm, the darkest mourning cloth of clouds that ever overshadowed the face of the heavens, is sooner or later scattered and dissipated before the light of the great luminary: but in these deep alleys and narrow pathways reigns a perpetual gloom, the source of pining discontent and peevish melancholy.

There sits the artist on his bench, pale as the grass beneath the thick spreading oak; actuated, like a machine, by the will of another, he moves not from place to place, but is restrained by an artificial necessity to his gloomy habitation.

But in our country, and with us, a tree, on occa-

<sup>74</sup> Printed in the *Jersey Chronicle*, July 18, 1795, as "The Creek Indian in Philadelphia, No. VII. Written about Midnight."

This letter, supposedly by a Creek Indian chief who had been sent by his tribe to bargain with the American government for terms of a treaty is interesting as illustrating Freneau's views of primitivism, as well as his deistic conception of nature and religion.

sion, will serve us for a house. Our largest wigwams are erected and finished in a day, and admit the light and air in abundance. In summer, we allow the winds to blow freely through the sides, made of cane and wattles; in the winter, the fire is placed in the middle, and all enjoy an equal share. Our woods supply us with plenty of fuel, and for nothing; while *here* it is brought to the inhabitant in little niggardly parcels, and at the cost of much money. In many of their habitations *here* we are not allowed to see the cheerful blaze—it is confined in a thick dark case of iron, and throws out a deadly smothering heat that never fails to deject and afflict my spirit. In others, the fireplace is in the side of the wall—the master of the wigwam only enjoyeth the heat, and looketh with a stern eye on those who approach to partake of his little sneaking fire of two sticks.

But before the night is advanced too far, and the taper that yet burns brightly before me shall grow dim in the socket, I will put down some few particulars of the manner of what is called the savage life, by the white men.

I feel a glow of reanimation at the recollection of the charming vision and would instantly return to enjoy it, were I not restrained by the frowns of the big men of the council, who have strictly enjoined my brethren and myself not to return without at least the looking-glasses, blankets, and brandy.

In the morning early, we rise from the bed of skins to hail the first dawn of the sun. We seize our bows and arrows—we fly hastily through the dews of the forests—we attack the deer, the stag, or the buffalo, and return with abundance of food for the whole family. Wherever we run it is amidst the luxuriant vegetation of Nature, the delectable regale of flowers and blossoms, and beneath trees bending with plump and joyous fruits.

By this time the stomach receives its food with a pleasure unknown to the puny sons of this huge village. Our drink is the milk of the goat, mingled with the clear water of the stream flowing over the white sand or yellow pebbles. It is that which every wise Indian prefers, because it is the drink prepared by the hand of *nature*.

Every desire of the heart is considered as a blessing of this our common mother. These desires are few and simple, and are almost always within our power to gratify. We can vary them at pleasure, and thus they are always new.

We are strangers to the cruel passion of jealousy, and consider that man as under the dominion of the foolish spirit who is distrustful of his wife. Our young women live constantly under the golden star of love; nor do we think the less of them if, before they are married, they indulge in that amiable passion.

In the forests, we acknowledge no distinction of property. The woods are as free as the waters; and the odious landmark was never seen to arrest the foot 10 of the hunter.

We are carried along upon the great wheel of things. We trouble ourselves not about the uncertainties, or the seeming irregularities of its motions. When the comet extends its long glittering tail over our thick forests, or when the moon puts on her black mantle of mourning, we apprehend no cause of alarm. It is the work of the great spirit of the universe, who sleepeth not, but day and night guides his wonderful machine in the way that is best.

However numerous may be our wives, or our children around us, we afflict not our souls with trouble to know what will become of them when we are no more. Whether they shall be doomed to carry wood, as slaves, on the borders of the white men; or to bring the heavy load of waters from the springs of *Owya menah*, it is the same thing. We leave them to the care of that good Being who is the protector of the destitute.

We hear not the voice of the taxgatherer at our 30 doors, to take away our bed of skins to support the luxuries of the proud and governments that riot on the spoils of the poor. We despise all tributes, and abhor those burdens which are imposed on the white men to tame and degrade the spirit.

Surrounded by forests that have no lines of boundary, we fear no storms—they blow far above us and are spent in the regions over the tops of the trees. We are in dread of no droughts, for nature has so overshadowed the soil that the sunbeams cannot scorch it. It is therefore always moist, and favorable to the little gardens that give us the vegetables we want. The most impetuous torrents are arrested by the woods and thickets, and cannot sweep away our harvests before them.

Our manner of life renders us alert, cheerful, and courageous. We live in the midst of content; and when the time comes that we must depart to the silent mansions of our fathers, we depart without re-

gret, because we are sure that our sleep, though in reality it may be long, can be to us but a moment. When that interrupting pause of life is once made, a total oblivion of the past ensues; but we suppose we shall soon revive, young, vigorous, and beautiful, to enjoy once more the chase of the forest and the pleasures of the wigwam. This seems to be the economy of Nature, at least with regard to the men of the woods.

1795

### Stanzas

*Occasioned by certain absurd, extravagant, and even blasphemous panegyrics and encomiums on the character of the late gen. Washington, that appeared in several pamphlets, journals, and other periodical publications, in January, 1800.*

No tongue can tell, no pen describe  
The frenzy of a numerous tribe,  
Who, by distemper'd fancy led,  
Insult the memory of the dead.  
Of old, there were in every age  
Who stuff'd with gods the historian's page,  
And raised beyond the human sphere  
Some who, we know, were mortal here.

Such was the case, we know full well  
When darkness spread her pagan spell;  
Mere insects, born for tombs and graves,  
They changed into celestial knaves;  
Made some, condemn'd to tombs and shrouds,  
Lieutenant generals in the clouds.

In journals meant to spread the news  
From state to state—and we know whose—  
We read a thousand idle things  
That madness pens, or folly sings.

Was, Washington, your conquering sword  
Condemn'd to such a base reward?  
Was trash, like that we now review,  
The tribute to your valor due?

One holds you *more than mortal kind*,  
One holds you *all ethereal mind*,  
This puts you in your Saviour's seat,  
'That makes you *dreadful in retreat*.

One says you *are become a star*,  
One makes you *more resplendent, far*;  
One sings, that, when to death you bow'd,  
Old mother nature *shriek'd aloud*.

30

We grieve to see such pens profane  
The first of chiefs, the first of men.—  
To Washington—a man, who died—  
Is *abba*,<sup>75</sup> *father* well applied?

Absurdly, in a frantic strain,  
Why ask him not for *sun* and *rain*?—  
We sicken at the vile applause  
That bids him *give the ocean laws*.

Ye patrons of the ranting strain,  
What *temples have been rent in twain*?  
What fiery chariots have been sent  
To dignify the sad event?—

O ye profane, irreverent few,  
Who reason's medium never knew,  
On you she never glanced her beams;  
You carry all things to extremes.

Shall they who spring from parent earth  
Pretend to more than mortal birth?  
Or, to the omnipotent allied,  
Control his heaven, or join his side?

Or is there not some chosen curse,  
Some vengeance due, with lightning's force,  
That far and wide destruction spreads,  
To burst on such irreverent heads!

Had they, in life, be-praised him so,  
What would have been the event I know:  
He would have spurn'd them, with disdain,  
Or rush'd upon them with his cane.

He was no god, ye flattering knaves,  
He *own'd no world, he ruled no waves*;  
But—and exalt it, if you can,  
He was the upright, *honest man*.

This was his glory; this outshone  
Those attributes you dote upon:  
On this strong ground he took his stand;  
Such virtue saved a sinking land.

1800

1825

<sup>75</sup> A title of honor, generally signifying "Father," used by Jews in the Talmudic period; also used as a title for the deity by Jesus and his contemporaries, and later by Greek-speaking Christians.

## On a Honey Bee

DRINKING FROM A GLASS OF WINE  
AND DROWNED THEREIN

THOU, born to sip the lake or spring,  
Or quaff the waters of the stream,  
Why hither come, on vagrant wing?  
Does Bacchus tempting seem,  
Did he for you this glass prepare?  
Will I admit you to a share?

40 Did storms harass or foes perplex,  
Did wasps or king-birds bring dismay,  
Did wars distress, or labors vex,  
Or did you miss your way?  
A better seat you could not take  
Than on the margin of this lake.

10

Welcome!—I hail you to my glass:  
All welcome here you find;  
Here let the cloud of trouble pass,  
Here be all care resigned.  
50 This fluid never fails to please,  
And drown the griefs of men or bees.

What forced you here we cannot know,  
And you will scarcely tell,—  
But cheery we would have you go  
And bid a glad farewell:  
On lighter wings we bid you fly,—  
Your dart will now all foes defy.

20

Yet take not, oh! too deep a drink,  
And in this ocean die;  
Here bigger bees than you might sink,  
Even bees full six feet high.  
Like Pharaoh, then, you would be said  
To perish in a sea of red.

30

Do as you please, your will is mine;  
Enjoy it without fear,  
And your grave will be this glass of wine,  
Your epitaph—a tear;  
Go, take your seat in Charon's <sup>76</sup> boat;  
We'll tell the hive, you died afloat.

1809

<sup>76</sup> The ferryman on the River Styx.

*To a Caty-Did*

In a branch of willow hid  
Sings the evening Caty-did:  
From the lofty locust bough  
Feeding on a drop of dew,  
In her suit of green arrayed  
Hear her singing in the shade  
Caty-did, Caty-did, Caty-did!

While upon a leaf you tread,  
Or repose your little head,  
On your sheet of shadows laid,  
All the day you nothing said:  
Half the night your cheery tongue  
Reveled out its little song,  
Nothing else but Caty-did.

From your lodgings on the leaf  
Did you utter joy or grief?—  
Did you only mean to say,  
I have had my summer's day,  
And am passing, soon, away  
To the grave of Caty-did:—  
Poor, unhappy Caty-did!

But you would have uttered more  
Had you known of nature's power—  
From the world when you retreat,  
And a leaf's your winding sheet,  
Long before your spirit fled,  
Who can tell but nature said,  
Live again, my Caty-did!  
Live and chatter, Caty-did.

Tell me, what did Caty do?  
Did she mean to trouble you?  
Why was Caty not forbid  
To trouble little Caty-did?  
Wrong indeed at you to fling,  
Hurting no one while you sing  
Caty-did! Caty-did! Caty-did!

Why continue to complain?  
Caty tells me, she again  
Will not give you plague or pain:—  
Caty says you may be hid  
Caty will not go to bed  
While you sing us Caty-did.  
Caty-did! Caty-did! Caty-did!

But while singing, you forgot  
To tell us what did Caty not:  
Caty did not think of cold,  
Flocks retiring to the fold,  
Winter, with his wrinkles old,  
Winter, that yourself foretold  
When you gave us Caty-did.

50

Stay securely in your nest;  
Caty now will do her best,  
All she can to make you blest;  
But, you want no human aid—  
10 Nature, when she formed you, said,  
"Independent you are made,  
My dear little Caty-did:  
Soon yourself must disappear  
With the verdure of the year,—"  
And to go, we know not where,  
With your song of Caty-did.

60

1815

20 *On the Universality and Other Attributes  
of the God of Nature*<sup>77</sup>

All that we see, about, abroad,  
What is it all, but nature's God?  
In meaner works discover'd here  
No less than in the starry sphere.

In seas, on earth, this God is seen;  
All that exist, upon him lean;  
He lives in all, and never stray'd  
A moment from the works he made:

30 His system fix'd on general laws  
Bespeaks a wise creating cause;  
Impartially he rules mankind  
And all that on this globe we find.

10

Unchanged in all that seems to change,  
Unbounded space is his great range;  
To one vast purpose always true,  
No time, with him, is old or new.

In all the attributes divine  
Unlimited perfectings shine;  
40 In these enwrapt, in these complete,  
All virtues in that centre meet.

20

<sup>77</sup> This and the next two poems illustrate Freneau's deistic religion.

This power who doth all powers transcend,  
To all intelligence a friend,  
Exists, the *greatest and the best* \*  
Throughout all worlds, to make them blest.

All that he did he first approved,  
He all things into *being* loved;  
O'er all he made he still presides,  
For them in life, or death provides.

1815

### *On the Uniformity and Perfection of Nature*

On one fix'd point all nature moves,  
Nor deviates from the track she loves;  
Her system, drawn from reason's source,  
She scorns to change her wonted course.

Could she descend from that great plan  
To work unusual things for man,  
To suit the insect of an hour—  
This would betray a want of power,

Unsettled in its first design  
And erring, when it did combine  
The parts that form the vast machine,  
The figures sketch'd on nature's scene.

Perfections of the great first cause  
Submit to no contracted laws,  
But all-sufficient, all-supreme,  
Include no trivial views in them.

Who looks through nature with an eye  
That would the scheme of heaven descry,  
Observes her constant, still the same,  
In all her laws, through all her frame.

10

No imperfection can be found  
In all that is, above, around,—  
All, nature made, in reason's sight  
Is order all and all is right.<sup>78</sup>

20

1815

\* Jupiter, optimus, maximus. Cicero.

### *On the Religion of Nature*

The power that gives with liberal hand  
'The blessings man enjoys, while here,  
And scatters through a smiling land  
The abundant products of the year;  
That power of nature, ever bless'd,  
Bestow'd religion with the rest.

Born with ourselves, her early sway  
Inclines the tender mind to take  
The path of right, fair virtue's way  
Its own felicity to make.  
This universally extends  
And leads to no mysterious ends.

10

Religion, such as nature taught,  
With all divine perfection suits;  
Had all mankind this system sought  
Sophists would cease their vain disputes,  
And from this source would nations know  
All that can make their heaven below.

This deals not curses on mankind,  
Or dooms them to perpetual grief,  
If from its aid no joys they find,  
It damns them not for unbelief;  
Upon a more exalted plan  
Creatress nature dealt with man—

20

Joy to the day, when all agree  
On such grand systems to proceed,  
From fraud, design, and error free,  
And which to truth and goodness lead:  
Then persecution will retreat  
And man's religion be complete.

30

1815

<sup>78</sup> Compare the concluding lines of the second epistle of Pope's *Essay on Man* (1732):

All Nature is but Art, unknown to thee;  
All Chance, Direction, which thou canst not see;  
All Discord, Harmony not understood;  
All partial Evil, universal Good:  
And, spite of Pride, in erring Reason's spite,  
One truth is clear, Whatever is, is right.

## JAMES FENIMORE COOPER (1789-1851)

Cooper has been interpreted variously by different generations. By the time he went abroad in 1826, his first half dozen novels had made him an international figure. His stories were republished in England and translated in France, Germany, Italy, Sweden, and Denmark almost immediately. He was widely applauded as the American Scott. During the years that he spent in Europe (1826-1833), he became a critic of European civilization, and immediately upon his return home, he became thoroughly disliked by large segments of American society for his frank criticism of life as he found it in the United States. Following his death in 1851, his position became secure as the great prose poet of the frontier and as the annalist of American naval history. The twentieth century is inclined to find his social criticism most significant. He was at various times novelist, romancer of the frontier and of the sea, chronicler and historian, commentator on civilizations and governments, and critic of society.

Motivated as he was throughout his life by what he called his "American principles," and living in a time when the United States was struggling through schisms and conflicts to attain national harmony and cultural homogeneity, it was inevitable that he should have been more than a mere practitioner of *belles-lettres* or a spinner of pleasant yarns. During the years when Cooper grew to manhood, America was divided politically between Federalists and Republicans, socially between aristocrats and democrats, religiously between Congregationalists and Unitarians, philosophically between idealists and materialists, and economically between agrarians and industrialists. The party spirit of Hamilton and Jefferson's day developed into the factionalism of Jackson's time. Men like Cooper felt that these divergencies and conflicts must be synthesized by a unifying body of principles before national and cultural unity could be achieved. All of his writings are therefore in greater or lesser degree activated by his so-called "American principles," which have been analyzed by Professor Robert E. Spiller as (1) a belief in liberty as a moral force, (2) a social structure with private property ownership as its base, (3) an aristocracy of worth, instead of

blood or wealth, and (4) a strong sense of nationality and cultural solidarity. These principles and their implications animate much of Cooper's works. Their injection into his writings removes his books from the narrow realm of polite literature into that broader concept by which American literature is conceived as an expression of the whole of American experience. Literature, he held, should not exist as an end in itself, and the social novel as he wrote it he considered to be a consciously purposive but nevertheless legitimate form of art. Aside from his great saga of *Leatherstocking* on the frontier and of his notable sea stories, Cooper's greatest service as a literary man is his enlargement of the scope of American letters.

Born at Burlington, New Jersey, in 1789, Cooper spent his boyhood at Otsego Hall, Cooperstown, New York, where his father, a judge and owner of a large estate in what was still essentially a frontier country, lived in gentlemanly and patriarchal state. It has been suggested that here already were brought to bear upon the boy the two dominant, often rival, forces of his character: (1) the inherited gentility of family, aristocratic bearing, and patrician way of life and (2) the republican sympathies inherent in the frontier conditions of central New York. Following his preparation for college by an Anglican clergyman of Albany, he entered Yale in 1802, but failed to distinguish himself as a student, meanwhile acquiring a settled distaste for New England and a decided prejudice against all Yankees. Cashiered for a student prank during his junior year, he was articled by his father to the captain of a merchant vessel sailing for England, and during 1808-1811 he served as a midshipman in the United States Navy and saw duty chiefly on the Great Lakes. Following his marriage in 1811 to Susan Augusta De Lancey of an old Tory family, he resigned from the Navy and settled down to the pleasant life of a country gentleman in Westchester County, where he was near enough to New York City to attend the theatre and to enjoy social and literary contacts.

Up to this time he had given no indication of being interested in writing; but one day, while read-



ing aloud to his wife an English novel, and growing impatient with its insipid nature, he remarked that he could write a better book himself. Challenged by his wife to try, he wrote *Precaution*, published in 1820. It is a conventional novel of English society, about which Cooper knew nothing at first hand; but its poor success aroused Cooper's fighting instincts to write a book that would command the attention of readers. Ashamed of having "fallen into the track of imitation" in his first work, Cooper later explained, "I endeavoured to repay the wrong done to my own views [his American principles], by producing a work that should be purely American, and of which love of country should be the theme." The result was *The Spy* (1821), which established his reputation as a novelist, and which marks, according to Carl Van Doren, the coming of age of American fiction. A cursory comparison between this novel and the best of Charles Brockden Brown's hot-house products should serve to illustrate the truth of Mr. Van Doren's observation.

The action of the story is localized in Westchester County, the Neutral Ground between the two armies of the Revolutionary War, which his long residence had made thoroughly familiar to him. For his hero he chose Harvey Birch, a spy, who had served General Washington with extraordinary fidelity, and an account of whose exploits he had heard years before from John Jay.

Although the language is somewhat stilted and affected, the story itself is vigorously narrated. It introduces us to Cooper's device of flight and pursuit, which he was to repeat many times in his later novels. It contains, besides, a surprising variety of characters drawn from all stations of life, and it develops and maintains suspense admirably through rapid action, sharp contrast, and mental tension. Three editions of *The Spy* were called for during the first year of its appearance, and Cooper was gratified to find popular support for his idea of employing familiar American scenes, interests, and characters for literary treatment. The success of the book had the added effect of heightening or confirming the ideas slowly forming in his mind of his so-called American "opinions" or "principles."

His next novel, *The Pioneers* (1823), was an extension of these same principles with the difference that for its material he turned to another great source-area of American fiction—the settlement of the frontier. The novel introduces us not only to Natty Bumppo, the Leatherstocking, who was to become his greatest fictional creation, but also to his successful portraiture of that vast movement by which the

wilderness was conquered by the American people. Here he was in his native element, having to draw only upon his own knowledge of the frontier society in which he had grown up. This familiarity with the variety of scene and character and his matchless skill of infusing vitality into it account for the remarkable success which the book enjoyed. Thirty-four hundred copies were sold on the first day of its publication.

Before he went on with this theme, he wrote *The Pilot* (1824, but dated 1823), a patriotic romance of the sea during Revolutionary days. The book was prompted by his dissatisfaction with Scott's *Pirate*. Believing that Scott as a landsman had failed to make the best of his opportunities, Cooper aimed to show in *The Pilot* what a man who had sailed the high seas might do with a sea tale. The story is notable as a thrilling account of sea battles, of flights and pursuits, in which John Paul Jones as the pilot figures prominently. But his best creation is the salty old sailor, Long Tom Coffin, who is on the sea what Leatherstocking is in the forest. The book is the first of a notable group of American sea stories, to which Cooper himself later added, among others, *The Red Rover* in 1828, *The Wing-and-Wing* in 1842, and *Afloat and Ashore* in 1844, and to which belong such classics as Dana's *Two Years before the Mast* (1840) and Melville's *Moby Dick* (1851).

Following these three successes, Cooper became the leading literary personality in New York City. He founded and dominated the famous literary society, the Bread and Cheese Club, took an active part in such public affairs as the welcoming of Lafayette on his return to America, and received an honorary degree from Columbia. About this time he planned a series of thirteen historical and patriotic novels, one for each of the original states, but only one was written—*Lionel Lincoln* (1825), an accurate but rather dull account of Bunker's Hill. The next year he returned to Leatherstocking in *The Last of the Mohicans*, to write what is generally considered his best novel. In it Natty Bumppo reappears as Hawkeye, now in the prime of manhood, as a scout in the frontier warfare between the English and the French and Indians. The book introduces also the Indian chiefs, Chingachgook and Uncas, distinguished for their noble, cunning, and romantic characters, as Magua, the Iroquois chieftain, is notable for the opposite qualities. The book is devoted to an epic-like portrayal of the vanishing Indian race, in a setting of the changeless majesty of the forest that sharpens, by contrast, the restless sense of danger and death.

In 1827 Cooper published *The Prairie*, portraying Leatherstocking in his extreme old age, compelled to retreat before the encroaching westward movement of the settlements. It completes the saga of the pioneer. Years later, after much had intervened to take his mind away from Chingachgook and Uncas, Magua and Hawkeye, he wrote two more novels, *The Pathfinder* in 1840 and *The Deerslayer* in 1841. These supply, as it were, the third and first acts, respectively, to make the five novels an epic of the frontier in a kind of dramatic progression of five acts. The order in which they should be read to illustrate what Cooper himself referred to as "a drama in five acts" is as follows: *The Deerslayer* (1841), *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826), *The Pathfinder* (1840), *The Pioneers* (1823), and *The Prairie* (1827). Leatherstocking is the unifying character, shown in five successive stages of his long and hazardous life. In *The Deerslayer*, laid in the time between 1740 and 1745, he is a young woodsman, on his first warpath. *The Last of the Mohicans* and *The Pathfinder* both belong to the period of the French and Indian wars—1756–1757, to be precise—when Leatherstocking, now aged about forty, is at the height of his strength and prowess. In *The Pioneers*, we are carried forward to 1793. The old scout is already past his prime. The country is being rapidly settled; and the old hunter and pathfinder, as he is compelled to retreat before the successive waves of settlers, grumbles that he loses himself in the clearings which the settlers' axes have made. In *The Prairie*, which represents the dénouement, we have arrived at the year 1804, just after the Louisiana Purchase. The frontiersman, fleeing before the encroachments and restraints of the settlements, finds himself an old man—no longer the deerslayer and pathfinder, but a trapper. His former friends are all dead; and his famous rifle Killdeer is now out-of-date and ready, like its owner, to be laid aside. Such are his thoughts as he watches the emigrant trains typifying the westward surge of civilization in which there is no place for his free life.

Like Daniel Boone, Leatherstocking is a heroic figure symbolizing a momentous epoch in American history. He is a highly romanticized figure, too much the poet of fine moral sentiment and the philosopher of deistic altruism to be quite convincing as a man drawn entirely from frontier life. Similarly Cooper's "noble red men" are idealizations of dignity, self-control, tribal loyalty, and reverence, which identify them more with Christian than pagan ethics, and suggest that, like Leatherstocking, they derive as much from French theories of the noble savage as from Cooper's own observations among the characters of

the frontier. The polished British and French officers and gentlemen who move across the scenes are too much the "fine flowers of civilization" to be quite alive. Finally, his "females" (for that was the term used in Cooper's day, when "lady" was still reserved for women of social or class distinction) are conventional figures possessing tender hearts, graceful forms, and a superabundance of "sensibility," so that Lowell had some justice on his side when he wrote in *A Fable for Critics*:

And the women he draws from one model don't vary,  
All sappy as maples and flat as a prairie.

There are other flaws. The language is often stilted and verbose. Evidences of hurried and careless writing are everywhere. Words are often ill-chosen, attempts at dialogue are sometimes amateurish, and pseudo-archaisms detract from the total effect of naturalness and simplicity that he aimed at. He shows little skill in anything more than the simplest plot; his handling of a complex situation is always confusing or cumbersome. Some of his stories open languidly, and others spin themselves out needlessly after the main business of the story has been transacted. Instead of carefully working out proper motivations, he resorts too frequently to stock devices; and some of his most thrilling narratives and his most exciting episodes—a battle, a pursuit, a capture, an escape, or a hand-to-hand conflict—are all too often prepared by some trifling accident or coincidence of the sort that led Mark Twain to rename the Leatherstocking tales the "Broken-Twig Series."

Nevertheless, as Percy H. Boynton has observed, few who came to scoff could have remained to rival or surpass Cooper as a story-teller. His accounts of deadly struggles and hairbreadth escapes have thrilled millions of readers at home and abroad, and his novels were long the most potent inducements to lure weary Europeans to the new land. In Europe, as in America, he remains perennially popular, and few ask or care how accurate his details of frontier existence or how authentic his characterization of woodsmen and Indians are. His saga-like portrayal of the frontiersman received eloquent expression in the remark of a French statesman in the spring of 1917, when the American national spirit was at length roused to enter the world conflict, "Thank God, the spirit of Leatherstocking is awake." Meanwhile, a hundred years after their appearance, Cooper's novels continue to sell in a way to gladden the heart of many a contemporary novelist and to prove the justice of Cooper's remark late in his life, "If anything from the

pen of the writer of these romances is to outlive himself, it is unquestionably the series of 'The Leatherstocking Tales.'"

Long before the epic of the frontier was told, Cooper turned to new scenes and other books. In 1826 he received a nominal appointment as consul in Lyons, France, and for seven years (1826-1833) he lived in Europe, traveling a good deal in England, Holland, Germany, France, Switzerland, and Italy, and meeting many European notables. This experience vastly widened his outlook and turned his mind in new directions. His travels made him see his own country in a different light and to appreciate anew her virtues; and while he was made aware of the graces and dignities of aristocratic countries, he also appraised the social oppressions on which they so often depended. His nationalism thus intensified, he resented the ignorance everywhere shown by Europeans regarding America, and set himself to educating them in sounder views and attitudes toward his native land. It was a hopeless and thankless task, as Franklin or Irving could have told him—especially for one as unabashedly outspoken as Cooper was. His *Notions of the Americans* (1828), too frankly partisan to convince Europeans, served only to annoy them; and his three novels—*The Bravo* (1831), *The Heidenmauer* (1832), and *The Headsman* (1833), designed to "debunk" the glamour of aristocratic and feudal traditions in Italy, Germany, and Switzerland, respectively—further antagonized his European readers. An unprofitable controversy in Paris over the relative costs of the French and American governments into which he allowed himself to be drawn pleased neither nation. His residence in Europe served only to precipitate the conflicts long brewing within him between his innately aristocratic social sensibilities and his republican convictions and to engender the critical temperament that embittered the rest of his life.

But before his comparative studies of European and American society completely absorbed him, he wrote three more novels that are innocent of social and political criticism. *The Red Rover* of 1827 is a notable sea tale in which the ocean plays the same role in disciplining man that the frontier and later the prairie play in the life of Natty Bumppo. In *Wept of Wish-ton-Wish* (1829) he wrote a historical romance of New England around an episode of King Philip's War that was more successful than *Lionel Lincoln* had been, despite his apparent dislike of the Puritan characters whom he portrayed. *The Water Witch*, which followed the next year, and which

Cooper regarded as the most imaginative of his books, is another story of the sea, including an account of a spirited naval battle; but his attempt to localize a supernatural legend in New York harbor, he admitted a few years later, proved "a comparative failure."

When he returned to New York in 1834, he was met by an attack upon his conduct as a critic of Europe. A *Letter to His Countrymen* (1834) was his prompt reply, explaining that his books on Europe were motivated solely by his desire to set aristocracy in its proper relation to democracy and to bring "American opinion . . . to bear on European facts." But he went further to explain that while he espoused republican as against aristocratic principles, he was not prepared to join wholeheartedly in the American chorus of self-approval just then sounding on every hand. He discovered that during the seven years of his absence the American temper had undergone a sweeping change, and he did not like what he saw of the political demagoguery, the social leveling rampant under the new Jacksonian spirit of frontier democracy, and the rising power of the masses unless they were prepared to wield that power wisely.

A careful reading of the passages in *The American Democrat* (1838) in which he distinguished between "the aristocrat" and "the democrat" will indicate why, though he considered some of the popular fruits of Jacksonian democracy to be vicious, breeding a greedy, ignorant, and contentious spirit, he could admire the sterling qualities of Old Hickory himself, and vote for him. It was not democracy that he attacked, but what he considered the abuse of it. Accordingly he lashed out at every group or agency which he sensed to be dangerous to true democracy—whether these represented entrenched conservatism or unbridled innovation. He particularly deplored the factionalism which party spirit seemed to him to breed. Himself nominally a member of the Democratic party (although he did not subscribe to all its tenets), he repeatedly declared that he "belonged" to neither of the two great American parties, and that if he had his way, he would do away with parties altogether. While his European novels attacked political corruption and feudalistic survivals in old-world governments and society, pointed to the dangers inherent in the assumption by government of infallibility or arbitrary power, and illustrated the baneful effects of special privilege, they were intended also to warn Americans that watchful vigilance was necessary to prevent the perversion of republicanism into tyrannical absolutism. And he made it clear that the



honorable guild of the sued," he himself became one of "the most vilified men in America."

Personalities loomed large in these legal battles; but Cooper was really interested in larger issues and broader principles. These have been conveniently summarized by Professor Robert E. Spiller as a set of ideals: (1) "a class consciousness in America founded on a flexible principle of moral worth and individual ability, but controlling social life, as in Europe, through education, wealth, and property," (2) "an American press, freed from imitative servility to foreign presses and foreign political interests, and guided by high moral and patriotic ideals," and (3) "an American literary criticism, freed from personal abuse, and consciously fostering a national literature." Naturally his adversaries lost sight of these more general objects, and, while attributing his quarrelsomeness to personal vindictiveness, put him down as a common scold. These embroilments continued to embitter his later years, during which he found himself distracted and confused by issues that carried him further and further from his more rewarding career as a novelist.

Indeed, in 1834 he swore that he would write no more novels for an ungrateful world unprepared to profit by good advice; but once fairly launched on his controversial career, there was no withdrawing from social criticism, and after six years he returned to the novel as such, finishing out in 1840 and 1841 the Leatherstocking series. He began in 1836 a series of five volumes of *Gleanings in Europe*—critical travel sketches of France, England, Switzerland, Italy, and Germany, that irritated the people of two continents; in 1839 he published an admirable *History of the Navy of the United States of America*, the real value of which long remained obscured by a controversy that had no direct bearing on the merit of the book; and he wrote also various stories and books of a miscellaneous character. So he proceeded, in the midst of vilification and controversy, to produce a shelf of fiction, history, and social criticism.

One important group of these later works is a series of sea stories. *Mercedes of Castile* (1840) deals with the first voyage of Columbus. *The Two Admirals* (1842) contains one of his best accounts of a naval battle, and *Wing-and-Wing* (1842), a romantic story of the Mediterranean, ranks high among his sea tales. *Afloat and Ashore* (1844), dealing with the evils of impressment, is no less powerful in its description of naval engagements than were his earlier sea stories, and *Jack Tier* (1846-48) is a lurid tale of piracy during the period of the Mexican War.

During 1844-46 he published also a series of novels

dealing with the theory of property rights as the basis of American civilization. *Afloat and Ashore* (1844) is properly a kind of introduction to the so-called Little-page trilogy: *Satanstoe* (1845), *The Chainbearer* (1845), and *The Redskins* (1846). In these novels he treated three generations of a New York family with some of his old skill, but more immediately they were Cooper's contribution to the Anti-Rent War of 1839-46, affording him an opportunity to promulgate his ideas of the inviolability of property rights as affecting his "American principles" of democracy, and providing future generations with a fine piece of social documentation for up-state New York for the period covered.

In 1846 he brought out the *Lives of Distinguished American Naval Officers*, to clinch his position as historian of the United States Navy. Thereafter came various novels and even a comedy called *Upside Down, or Philosophy in Petticoats*, which was produced in New York in 1850, but never published. Among his more notable later books were *The Crater* (1848), a social allegory relating the fate of a colony founded on a volcanic reef, and *The Ways of the Hour* (1850), a satire on trial by jury designed "to draw the attention of the reader to some of the social evils that beset us, more particularly in connection with the administration of criminal justice." The conclusion is the melancholy reflection of Cooper, within a year of his death, that after his long struggle for his "American opinions," the vulgar were still occupying the seats of the mighty, the press still used its power indiscriminately, and the demagogue still went unchecked, while the law and the courts were in the employ of those who planned the destruction of stability and the rights of property. Chaos—domestic, economic, national—threatened. His conclusion is that of an irreconcilable Tory commenting on past times when "in the days of the monarchy, in truth, greater republican simplicity really reigned among us, in a thousand ways" than reigns in the degenerate, decadent days of 1850. In the last days of his life he reaffirmed his distaste for the America of his later days and of the future toward which he saw America rushing, by forbidding any biography of his to be authorized.

While to most readers Cooper is the creator of the nearest approach Americans have to a national epic, and his Leatherstocking series undoubtedly remains his greatest contribution to American literature, he is coming to be viewed as essentially greater than a mere *belles-lettres* writer. For over and above the narrator of thrilling stories of the frontier and of the sea, he was a conservative patriot—none more sincere and

none more indefatigable in urging his countrymen to adopt noble principles while sloughing off shabby ones. If his patriotism led him into endless controversy with his countrymen, it was this same love of country that made him the creator of Harvey Birch,

Long Tom Coffin, Chingachgook, and Leatherstocking. His native qualities of character and the native quality of his books are what give him enduring worth.

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*Preface to The Spy*<sup>1</sup>

The author has often been asked if there were any foundation in real life, for the delineation of the principal character in this book. He can give no clearer answer to the question, than by laying before his readers a simple statement of the facts connected with its original publication.

Many years since, the writer of this volume was at the residence of an illustrious man, who had been employed in various situations of high trust during the darkest days of the American revolution. The dis-

course turned upon the effects which great political excitement produce on character, and the purifying consequences of a love of country, when that sentiment is powerfully and generally awakened in a people. He who, from his years, his services, and his knowledge of men, was best qualified to take the lead in such a conversation, was the principal speaker. After dwelling on the marked manner in which the great struggle of the nation, during the war of 1775, had given a new and honorable direction to the thoughts and practices of multitudes whose time had formerly been engrossed by the most vulgar concerns of life, he illustrated his opinions by relating an anecdote, the truth of which he could attest as a personal witness.

<sup>1</sup> *The Spy* (1821), the second of Cooper's novels, was his first popular success and his first book on an American theme. Cooper often rewrote his prefaces or introductions for new editions of his works. The preface here reprinted was written for the 1849 New York edition, printed by Putnam. It is of especial interest because it relates in detail the anecdote on which *The Spy* is based, as Cooper heard it from Judge John Jay, and because it reveals something of Cooper's method of writing his earlier romances.

The dispute between England and the United States of America, though not strictly a family quarrel, had many of the features of a civil war. The people of the latter were never properly and constitutionally subject to the people of the former, but the inhabitants of both countries owed allegiance to a common king. The Americans, as a nation, disavowed this allegiance, and the English choosing to support their sovereign in the attempt to regain his power, most of the feelings of an internal struggle were involved in the conflict. A large proportion of the emigrants from Europe, then established in the colonies, took part

with the crown; and there were many districts in which their influence, united to that of the Americans who refused to lay aside their allegiance, gave a decided preponderance to the royal cause. America was then too young, and too much in need of every heart and hand, to regard these partial divisions, small as they were in actual amount, with indifference. The evil was greatly increased by the activity of the English in profiting by these internal dissensions; and it became doubly serious when it was found that attempts were made to raise various corps of provincial troops, who were to be banded with those from Europe, to reduce the young republic to subjection. Congress named an especial and a secret committee, therefore, for the express purpose of defeating this object. Of this committee Mr. —, the narrator of the anecdote, was chairman.

In the discharge of the novel duties which now devolved on him, Mr. — had occasion to employ an agent whose services differed but little from those of a common spy. This man, as will easily be understood, belonged to a condition in life which rendered him the least reluctant to appear in so equivocal a character. He was poor, ignorant, so far as the usual instruction was concerned; but cool, shrewd, and fearless by nature. It was his office to learn in what part of the country the agents of the crown were making their efforts to embody men, to repair to the place, enlist, appear zealous in the cause he affected to serve, and otherwise to get possession of as many of the secrets of the enemy as possible. The last he of course communicated to his employers, who took all the means in their power to counteract the plans of the English, and frequently with success.

It will readily be conceived that a service like this was attended with great personal hazard. In addition to the danger of discovery, there was the daily risk of falling into the hands of the Americans themselves, who invariably visited sins of this nature more severely on the natives of the country than on the Europeans who fell into their hands. In fact, the agent of Mr. — was several times arrested by the local authorities; and, in one instance, he was actually condemned by his exasperated countrymen to the gallows. Speedy and private orders to his gaoler alone saved him from an ignominious death. He was permitted to escape; and this seeming, and indeed actual, peril was of great aid in supporting his assumed character among the English. By the Americans, in his

little sphere, he was denounced as a bold and inveterate Tory. In this manner he continued to serve his country in secret during the early years of the struggle, hourly environed by danger, and the constant subject of unmerited opprobrium.

In the year — Mr. — was named to a high and honorable employment at a European court. Before vacating his seat in Congress, he reported to that body an outline of the circumstances related, necessarily suppressing the name of his agent, and demanding an appropriation in behalf of a man who had been of so much use, at so great risk. A suitable sum was voted, and its delivery was confided to the chairman of the secret committee.

Mr. — took the necessary means to summon his agent to a personal interview. They met in a wood, at midnight. Here Mr. — complimented his companion on his fidelity and adroitness; explained the necessity of their communications being closed; and finally tendered the money. The other drew back, and declined receiving it. "The country has need of all its means," he said; "as for myself, I can work, or gain a livelihood in various ways." Persuasion was useless, for patriotism was uppermost in the heart of this remarkable individual; and Mr. — departed, bearing with him the gold he had brought, and a deep respect for the man who had so long hazarded his life, unrequited, for the cause they served in common.

The writer is under an impression that, at a later day, the agent of Mr. — consented to receive a remuneration for what he had done; but it was not until his country was entirely in a condition to bestow it.

It is scarcely necessary to add, that an anecdote like this, simply but forcibly told by one of its principal actors, made a deep impression on all who heard it. Many years later, circumstances, which it is unnecessary to relate, and of an entirely adventitious nature, induced the writer to publish a novel, which proved to be, what he little foresaw at the time, the first of a tolerably long series. The same adventitious causes which gave birth to the book, determined its scene and its general character. The former was laid in a foreign country; and the latter embraced a crude effort to describe foreign manners. When this tale was published, it became matter of reproach among the author's friends, that he, an American in heart as in birth, should give to the world a work which aided perhaps, in some slight degree, to feed the imagina-



tions of the young and unpractised among his own countrymen by pictures drawn from a state of society so different from that to which he belonged. The writer, while he knew how much of what he had done was purely accidental, felt the reproach to be one that, in a measure, was just. As the only atonement in his power, he determined to inflict a second book, whose subject should admit of no cavil, not only on the world, but on himself. He chose patriotism for his theme; and to those who read this introduction and the book itself, it is scarcely necessary to add, that he took the hero of the anecdote just related as the best illustration of his subject.

Since the original publication of "The Spy," there have appeared several accounts of different persons who are supposed to have been in the author's mind while writing the book. As Mr. — did not mention the name of his agent, the writer never knew any more of his identity with this or that individual, than has been here explained. Both Washington and Sir Henry Clinton had an unusual number of secret emissaries; in a war that partook so much of a domestic character, and in which the contending parties were people of the same blood and language, it could scarcely be otherwise.

The style of the book has been revised by the author in this edition. In this respect, he has endeavored to make it more worthy of the favor with which it has been received; though he is compelled to admit there are faults so interwoven with the structure of the tale that, as in the case of a decayed edifice, it would cost perhaps less to reconstruct than to repair. Five-and-twenty years have been as ages with most things connected with America. Among other advances, that of her literature has not been the least. So little was expected from the publication of an original work of this description, at the time it was written, that the first volume of "The Spy" was actually printed several months, before the author felt a sufficient inducement to write a line of the second.

The efforts expended on a hopeless task are rarely worthy of him who makes them, however low it may be necessary to rate the standard of his general merit.

One other anecdote connected with the history of this book, may give the reader some idea of the hopes of an American author, in the first quarter of the present century. As the second volume was slowly printing, from manuscript that was barely dry when it went into the compositor's hands, the publisher intimated that the work might grow to a length that would consume the profits. To set his mind at rest, the last chapter was actually written, printed and paged, several weeks before the chapters which precede it were even thought of. This circumstance, while it cannot excuse, may serve to explain the manner in which the actors are hurried off the scene.

A great change has come over the country since this book was originally written. The nation is passing from the gristle into the bone, and the common mind is beginning to keep even pace with the growth of the body politic. The march from Vera Cruz to Mexico was made under the orders of that gallant soldier who, a quarter of a century before, was mentioned with honor, in the last chapter of this very book. Glorious as was that march, and brilliant as were its results in a military point of view, a stride was then made by the nation, in a moral sense, that has hastened it by an age, in its progress toward real independence and high political influence. The guns that filled the valley of the Aztecs with their thunder, have been heard in echoes on the other side of the Atlantic, producing equally hope or apprehension.

There is now no enemy to fear, but the one that resides within. By accustoming ourselves to regard even the people as erring beings, and by using the restraints that wisdom has adduced from experience, there is much reason to hope that the same Providence which has so well aided us in our infancy, may continue to smile on our manhood.

Cooperstown, March 29, 1849.

1821, 1849



*Preface to The Pioneers*<sup>2</sup>

As this work professes, in its titlepage, to be a descriptive tale, they who will take the trouble to read it may be glad to know how much of its contents is literal fact, and how much is intended to represent a general picture. The Author is very sensible that, had he confined himself to the latter, always the most effective, as it is the most valuable, mode of conveying knowledge of this nature, he would have made a far better book. But in commencing to describe scenes, and perhaps he may add 10 characters, that were so familiar to his own youth, there was a constant temptation to delineate that which he had known, rather than that which he might have imagined. This rigid adhesion to truth, an indispensable requisite in history and travels, destroys the charm of fiction; for all that is necessary to be conveyed to the mind by the latter had better be done by delineations of principles, and of characters in their classes, than by a too fastidious attention to originals.

New York having but one county of Otsego, and the Susquchanna but one proper source, there can be no mistake as to the site of the tale. The history of this district of country, so far as it is connected with civilized men, is soon told.

Otsego, in common with most of the interior of the province of New York, was included in the county of Albany, previously to the war of the separation. It then became in a subsequent division of territory, a part of Montgomery; and, finally, having 30 obtained a sufficient population of its own, it was set apart as a county by itself, shortly after the peace of 1783. It lies among those low spurs of the Alleghanies which cover the midland counties of New York; and it is little east of a meridional line drawn through the center of the state. As the waters of New York either flow southerly into the Atlantic or northerly into Ontario, and its outlet, Otsego Lake, being the source of the Susquchanna, is, of necessity, among its highest lands. The face of the country, the climate as it 30 was found by the whites, and the manners of the

settlers, are described with a minuteness for which the Author has no other apology than the force of his own recollections.

Otsego is said to be a word compounded of Ot, a place of meeting, and Sego, or Sago, the ordinary term of salutation used by the Indians of this region. There is a tradition which says, that the neighboring tribes were accustomed to meet on the banks of the lake to make their treaties, and otherwise to strengthen their alliances, and which refers the name to this practice. As the Indian agent of New York had a log dwelling at the foot of the lake, however, it is not impossible that the appellation grew out of the meetings that were held at his council fires; the war drove off the agent, in common with the other officers of the crown; and his rude dwelling was soon abandoned. The Author remembers it a few years later, reduced to the humble office of a smoke-house.

20 In 1779, an expedition was sent against the hostile Indians, who dwelt about a hundred miles west of Otsego, on the banks of the Cayuga. The whole country was then a wilderness, and it was necessary to transport the baggage of the troops by means of the rivers—a devious but practicable route. One brigade ascended the Mohawk, until it reached the point nearest to the sources of the Susquchanna; whence it cut a lane through the forest to the head of the Otsego. The boats and baggage were carried over this “portage,” and the troops proceeded to the other extremity of the lake, where they disembarked, and encamped. The Susquchanna, a narrow though rapid stream at its source, was much filled with “flood wood,” or fallen trees; and the troops adopted a novel expedient to facilitate their passage. The Otsego is about nine miles in length, varying in breadth from half a mile to a mile and a half. The water is of great depth, limpid, and supplied from a thousand springs. At its foot, the banks are rather less than thirty feet 30 high; the remainder of its margin being in mountains, intervals, and points. The outlet, or the Susquchanna, flows through a gorge in the low banks just mentioned which may have a width of two hundred feet. This gorge was dammed, and the waters of the lake collected; the Susquchanna was converted into a rill. When all was ready, the troops embarked, the dam

<sup>2</sup> *The Pioneers* (1823) was Cooper's third novel, and the first of the Leatherstocking series to be written, although it depicts the third of the five phases of Leatherstocking's career. When Cooper wrote *The Pioneers* he had not yet formed the plan of a series. This preface, written for the edition of 1850, is of particular interest because of its autobiographical details.

was knocked away, the Otsego poured out its current, and the boats went merrily down with the current.

General James Clinton, the brother of George Clinton, then governor of New York, and the father of De Witt Clinton, who died governor of the same state in 1827, commanded the brigade employed on this duty. During the stay of the troops at the foot of the Otsego a soldier was shot for desertion. The grave of this unfortunate man was the first place of human interment that the Author ever beheld, as the smoke-<sup>10</sup> house was the first ruin! The swivel alluded to in this work was buried and abandoned by the troops on this occasion; and it was subsequently found in digging the cellars of the Author's paternal residence.

Soon after the close of the war, Washington, accompanied by many distinguished men, visited the scene of this tale, it is said, with a view to examine the facilities for opening a communication by water with other points of the country. He stayed but a few hours.

In 1785, the Author's father, who had an interest in extensive tracts of land in this wilderness, arrived with a party of surveyors. The manner in which the scene met his eye is described by Judge Temple. At the commencement of the following year the settlement began; and from that time to this the country has continued to flourish. It is a singular feature in American life, that, at the beginning of this century, when the proprietor of the estate had occasion for settlers on a new settlement, and in a remote county,<sup>30</sup> he was enabled to draw them from among the increase of the former colony.

Although the settlement of this part of Otsego a little preceded the birth of the Author, it was not sufficiently advanced to render it desirable that an event, so important to himself, should take place in the wilderness. Perhaps his mother had a reasonable distrust of the practice of Dr. Todd, who must then have been in the novitiate of his experimental acquirements. Be that as it may, the Author was brought an<sup>40</sup> infant into this valley, and all his first impressions were here obtained. He has inhabited it ever since, at intervals; and he thinks he can answer for the faithfulness of the picture he has drawn.

Otsego has now become one of the most populous districts of New York. It sends forth its emigrants like any other old region; and it is pregnant with industry and enterprise. Its manufactures are prosperous; and it is worthy of remark, that one of the most ingen-

ious machines known in European art is derived from the keen ingenuity which is exercised in this remote region.

In order to prevent mistake, it may be well to say that the incidents of this tale are purely a fiction. The literal facts are chiefly connected with the natural and artificial objects, and the customs of the inhabitants. Thus the academy, and court-house, and jail, and inn, and most similar things, are tolerably exact. They have all, long since, given place to other build-<sup>10</sup> ings of a more pretending character. There is also some liberty taken with the truth in the description of the principal dwelling: the real building had no "firstly" and "lastly." It was of bricks, and not of stone; and its roof exhibited none of the peculiar beauties of the "composite order." It was erected in an age too primitive for that ambitious school of architecture. But the Author indulged his recollections freely when he had fairly entered the door. Here<sup>20</sup> all is literal, even to the severed arm of Wolfe, and the urn which held the ashes of Queen Dido.\*

The Author has elsewhere said that the character of Leather-Stocking is a creation, rendered probable by such auxiliaries as were necessary to produce that effect. Had he drawn still more upon fancy, the lovers of fiction would not have so much cause for their objections to his work. Still the picture would not have been in the least true, without some substitutes for most of the other personages. The great proprietor resident on his lands, and giving his name to, instead of receiving it from his estates, as in Europe, is common over the whole of New York. The physician, with his theory, rather obtained than corrected by experiments on the human constitution; the pious, self-denying, laborious, and ill-paid missionary; the half-educated, litigious, envious, and disreputable lawyer, with his counterpoise, a brother of the profession, of better origin and of better character; the shiftless, bargaining, discontented seller of his "bet-<sup>30</sup> terments;" the plausible carpenter, and most of the others, are more familiar to all who have ever dwelt in a new country.

\* Though forests still crown the mountains of Otsego, the bear, the wolf, and the panther are nearly strangers to them. Even the innocent deer is rarely seen bounding beneath their arches; for the rifle, and the activity of the settlers, have driven them to other haunts. To this change (which, in some particulars, is melancholy to one who knew the country in its infancy) it may be added, that the Otsego is beginning to be a niggard in its treasures.

It may be well to say here, a little more explicitly, that there was no intention to describe with particular accuracy any real characters in this book. It has been often said, and in published statements, that the heroine of this book was drawn after a sister of the writer, who was killed by a fall from a horse now near half a century since. So ingenious is conjecture, that a personal resemblance has been discovered between the fictitious character and the deceased relative! It is scarcely possible to describe two females of the same class in life, who would be less alike, personally, than Elizabeth Temple and the sister of the Author who met with the deplorable fate mentioned. In a word, they were as unlike in this respect, as in history, character, and fortunes.

Circumstances rendered this sister singularly dear

to the Author. After a lapse of half a century, he is writing this paragraph with a pain that would induce him to cancel it, were it not still more painful to have it believed that one whom he regarded with a reverence that surpassed the love of a brother, was converted by him into the heroine of a work of fiction.

From circumstances which, after this introduction, will be obvious to all, the Author has had more pleasure in writing "The Pioneers" than the book will, probably, ever give any of its readers. He is quite aware of its numerous faults, some of which he had endeavored to repair in this edition; but as he has—in intention, at least—done his full share in amusing the world, he trusts to its good nature for overlooking this attempt to please himself.

1823, 1850

FROM

### *Notions of the Americans*<sup>3</sup>

FROM LETTER XXIII

[On Learning and Literature]

The literature of the United States, has indeed, too [two] powerful obstacles to conquer before (to use a mercantile expression) it can ever enter the markets of its own country on terms of perfect equality with that of England. Solitary and individual works of genius may, indeed, be occasionally brought to light, under the impulses of the high feeling which has conceived them; but, I fear, a good, wholesome, profitable and continued pecuniary support, is the applause that talent most craves.<sup>4</sup> The fact, that an American publisher can get an English work without money, must, for a few years longer, (unless legislative protection shall be extended to their own authors,) have a tendency to repress a national literature. No man will pay a writer for an epic, a tragedy, a sonnet, a

history, or a romance, when he can get a work of equal merit for nothing. I have conversed with those who are conversant on the subject, and, I confess, I have been astonished at the information they imparted.

A capital American publisher<sup>5</sup> has assured me that there are not a dozen writers in this country, whose works he should feel confidence in publishing at all, while he reprints hundreds of English books without the least hesitation. This preference is by no means so much owing to any difference in merit, as to the fact that, when the price of the original author is to be added to the uniform hazard which accompanies all literary speculations, the risk becomes too great. The general taste of the reading world in this country is better than that of England.\* The fact is both proved and explained by the circumstance that thousands of works that are printed and read in the mother country, are not printed and read here. The publisher on this side of the Atlantic has the advantage of seeing the reviews of every book he wishes to print, and, what is of far more importance, he knows, with the

<sup>3</sup> *Notions of the Americans* bore the subtitle, *Picked up by a Travelling Bachelor*. It was published in two volumes in London and Philadelphia in 1828.

<sup>4</sup> It is to be observed that Cooper, more than any other writer, helped American authors overcome this obstacle. Charles Brockden Brown had had to finance his own novels in a market flooded with cheap reprints of English works of fiction, for which, in the absence of international copyright laws, the publishers paid nothing to the authors. Irving had succeeded in making his writings pay, but he had turned largely to the European scene. Cooper, writing on native subjects, invaded the English market itself and made a profitable career of writing.

\* The writer does not mean that the best taste of America is better than that of England; perhaps it is not quite so good; but, as a whole, the American reading world requires better books than the whole of the English reading world.

<sup>5</sup> Probably Matthew Carey.

exception of books that he is sure of selling, by means of a name, the decision of the English critics before he makes his choice. Nine times in ten, popularity, which is all he looks for, is a sufficient test of general merit. Thus, while you find every English work of character, or notoriety, on the shelves of an American book-store, you may ask in vain for most of the trash that is so greedily devoured in the circulating libraries of the mother country, and which would be just as eagerly devoured here, had not a better taste been created by a compelled abstinence. That taste must now be overcome before such works could be sold at all.

When I say that books are not rejected here, from any want of talent in the writers, perhaps I ought to explain. I wish to express something a little different. Talent is sure of too many avenues to wealth and honours, in America, to seek, unnecessarily, an unknown and hazardous path. It is better paid in the ordinary pursuits of life, than it would be likely to be paid by an adventure in which an extraordinary and skilful, because practised, foreign competition is certain. Perhaps high talent does not often make the trial with the American bookseller; but it is precisely for the reason I have named.

The second obstacle against which American literature has to contend, is in the poverty of materials.<sup>6</sup> There is scarcely an ore which contributes to the wealth of the author, that is found, here, in veins as rich as in Europe. There are no annals for the historian; no follies (beyond the most vulgar and commonplace) for the satirist; no manners for the dramatist; no obscure fictions for the writer of romance; no gross and hardy offences against decorum for the moralist; nor any of the rich artificial auxiliaries of poetry. The weakest hand can extract a spark from the flint, but it would baffle the strength of a giant to attempt kindling a flame with a pudding-stone. I very well know there are theorists who assume that the society and institutions of this country are, or ought to be, particularly favourable to novelties and variety. But the experience of one month, in these States, is

<sup>6</sup> The dearth of American materials for the American romancer, which Cooper here complains of, he made his particular problem; and during the course of his long and productive career, he did much to enlarge the scope of subjects considered acceptable for literary treatment. After the false start in *Precaution* (1820), for which he turned to English scenes, he wrote primarily of America for Americans. Even *The Bravo*, *The Heidenmauer*, and *The Headsman*, though they have European settings, were designed for American as much as for European consumption.

sufficient to show any observant man the falsity of their position. The effect of a promiscuous assemblage any where, is to create a standard of deportment; and great liberty permits every one to aim at its attainment. I have never seen a nation so much alike in my life, as the people of the United States, and what is more, they are not only like each other, but they are remarkably like that which common sense tells them they ought to resemble. No doubt, traits of character that are a little peculiar, without, however, being either very poetical, or very rich, are to be found in remote districts; but they are rare, and not always happy exceptions. In short, it is not possible to conceive a state of society in which more of the attributes of plain good sense, or fewer of the artificial absurdities of life, are to be found, than here. There is no costume for the peasant, (there is scarcely a peasant at all,) no wig for the judge, no baton for the general, no diadem for the chief magistrate. The darkest ages of their history are illuminated by the light of truth; the utmost efforts of their chivalry are limited by the laws of God; and even the deeds of their sages and heroes are to be sung in a language that would differ but little from a version of the ten commandments. However useful and respectable all this may be in actual life, it indicates but one direction to the man of genius.

It is very true there are a few young poets now living in this country, who have known how to extract sweets from even these wholesome, but scentless native plants. They have, however, been compelled to seek their inspiration in the universal laws of nature, and they have succeeded, precisely in proportion as they have been most general in their application. Among these gifted young men, there is one (Halleck)<sup>7</sup> who is remarkable for an exquisite vein of ironical wit, mingled with a fine, poetical, and, frequently, a lofty expression. This gentleman commenced his career as a satirist in one of the journals of New-York. Heaven knows, his materials were none of the richest; and yet the melody of his verse, the quaintness and force of his comparisons, and the exceeding humour of his strong points, brought him instantly into notice. He then attempted a general satire, by giving the history of the early days of a *belle*. He was again successful, though every body, at

<sup>7</sup> Fitz-Greene Halleck (1790-1867), the close associate of Joseph Rodman Drake (1795-1820), wrote a long social satire called *Fanny* (1819). He is best known today for his "Marco Bozzaris" (1825).

least every body of any talent, felt that he wrote in leading-strings. But he happened, shortly after the appearance of the little volume just named, (Fanny,) to visit England. Here his spirit was properly excited, and, probably on a rainy day, he was induced to try his hand at a *jeu d'esprit*, in the mother country. The result was one of the finest semi-heroic ironical descriptions to be found in the English language.\* This simple fact, in itself, proves the truth of a great deal of what I have just been writing, since it shows the effect a superiority of material can produce on the efforts of a man of true genius.

Notwithstanding the difficulties of the subject, talent has even done more than in the instance of Mr. Halleck. I could mention several other young poets of this country of rare merit. By mentioning Bryant,<sup>8</sup> Percival,<sup>9</sup> and Sprague,<sup>10</sup> I shall direct your attention to the names of those whose works would be most likely to give you pleasure. Unfortunately they are not yet known in Italian, but I think even you would not turn in distaste from the task of translation which the best of their effusions will invite.

The next, though certainly an inferior branch of imaginative writing, is fictitious composition. From the facts just named, you cannot expect that the novelists, or romance writers of the United States, should be very successful. The same reason will be likely, for a long time to come, to repress the ardour of dramatic genius. Still, tales and plays are no novelties in the literature of this country. Of the former, there are many as old as soon after the revolution; and a vast number have been published within the last five years. One of their authors of romance, who curbed his talents by as few allusions as possible to actual society, is distinguished for power and comprehensiveness of thought. I remember to have read one of his books (Wicland) when a boy, and I take it to be a never-failing evidence of genius, that, amid a thousand similar pictures which have succeeded, the

\* This little *morceau* of pleasant irony is called *Alnwick Castle*. [Cooper's note.]

<sup>8</sup> William Cullen Bryant (1794-1878) had by 1828 become popularly known as the author of "Thanatopsis," "To a Water-fowl," and the other poems collected in his volume of *Poems* (1821).

<sup>9</sup> James Gates Percival (1795-1856) was then considered one of America's most notable poets, until overshadowed by the ascendancy of Bryant. He was active in many pursuits; besides journalist and poet, he was an able linguist, philologist, and geologist.

<sup>10</sup> Charles Sprague (1791-1875), a Boston poet, much under the influence of Collins and Gray and others of the graveyard school of English poets.

images it has left, still stand distinct and prominent in my recollection. This author (Mr. Brockden Brown) enjoys a high reputation among his countrymen, whose opinions are sufficiently impartial, since he flattered no particular prejudice of the nation in any of his works.

The reputation of Irving is well known to you. He is an author distinguished for a quality (humour) that has been denied his countrymen; and his merit is the more rare, that it has been shown in a state of society so cold and so restrained. Besides these writers, there are many others of a similar character, who enjoy a greater or less degree of favour in their own country. The works of two or three have even been translated (into French) in Europe, and a great many are reprinted in England.<sup>11</sup> Though every writer of fiction in America has to contend against the difficulties I have named, there is a certain interest in the novelty of the subject, which is not without its charm. I think, however, it will be found that they have all been successful, or the reverse, just as they have drawn warily, or freely, on the distinctive habits of their own country. I now speak of their success purely as writers of romance. It certainly would be possible for an American to give a description of the manners of his own country, in a book that he might choose to call a romance, which should be read, because the world is curious on the subject, but which would certainly never be read for that nearly indefinable poetical interest which attaches itself to a description of manners less bald and uniform. All the attempts to blend history with romance in America, have been comparatively failures, (and perhaps fortunately,) since the subjects are too familiar to be treated with the freedom that the imagination absolutely requires. Some of the descriptions of the progress of society on the borders, have had a rather better success, since there is a positive, though no very poetical, novelty in the subject; but, on the whole, the books which have been best received, are those in which the authors have trusted most to their own conceptions of character, and to qualities that are common to the rest of the world and to human nature. This fact, if its truth be admitted, will serve to prove that the American writer must seek his renown in the exhibition of qualities that are general, while he is confessedly compelled to limit his observations to a state of society that has a wonderful

<sup>11</sup> Principally Cooper's own romances.

tendency not only to repress passion, but to equalize humours.

The Americans have always been prolific writers on polemics and politics. Their sermons and fourth of July orations are numberless. Their historians, without being very classical or very profound, are remarkable for truth and good sense. There is not, perhaps, in the language a closer reasoner in metaphysics than Edwards;<sup>12</sup> and their theological writers find great favour among the sectarians of their respective schools.

The stage of the United States is decidedly English.<sup>13</sup> Both plays and players, with few exceptions, are imported. Theatres are numerous, and they are to be found in places where a traveller would little expect to meet them. Of course they are of all sizes, and of every degree of decoration and architectural beauty known in Europe, below the very highest. The façade of the principal theatre in Philadelphia, is a chaste specimen in marble, of the Ionic,<sup>14</sup> if my<sup>20</sup> memory is correct. In New-York, there are two theatres about as large as the Théâtre Français<sup>15</sup> (in the interior), and not much inferior in embellishments. Besides these, there is a very pretty little theatre, where lighter pieces are performed, and another with a vast stage for melodramas. There are also one or two other places of dramatic representation in this city, in which horses and men contend for the bays.

The Americans pay well for dramatic talent.<sup>30</sup> Cooke,<sup>16</sup> the greatest English tragedian of our age, died on this side of the Atlantic; and there are few players of eminence in the mother country who are not tempted, at some time or other, to cross the ocean. Shakspeare is, of course, the great author of America, as he is of England, and I think he is quite as well relished here as there. In point of taste, if all the rest of the world be any thing against England, that of America is the best, since it unquestionably approaches nearest to that of the continent of Europe.<sup>40</sup> Nearly one-half of the theatrical taste of the English is condemned by their own judgments, since the

stage is not much supported by those who have had an opportunity of seeing any other. You will be apt to ask me how it happens, then, that the American taste is better? Because the people, being less exaggerated in their habits, are less disposed to tolerate caricatures, and because the theatres are not yet sufficiently numerous (though that hour is near) to admit of a representation that shall not be subject to the control of a certain degree of intelligence. I have heard an English player complain that he never saw such a dull audience as the one before which he had just been exhibiting; and I heard the same audience complain that they never listened to such dull jokes. Now, there was talent enough in both parties; but the one had formed his taste in a coarse school, and the others had formed theirs under the dominion of common sense. Independently of this peculiarity, there is a vast deal of acquired, travelled taste in this country. English tragedy, and high English comedy, both of which, you know, are excellent, never fail here, if well played; that is, they never fail under the usual limits of all amusement. One will cloy of sweets. But the fact of the taste and judgment of these people, in theatrical exhibitions, is proved by the number of their good theatres, compared to their population.

Of dramatic writers there are none, or next to none. The remarks I have made in respect to novels apply with double force to this species of composition. A witty and successful American comedy could only proceed from extraordinary talent. There would be less difficulty, certainly, with a tragedy; but still, there is rather too much foreign competition, and too much domestic employment in other pursuits, to invite genius to so doubtful an enterprise. The very baldness of ordinary American life is in deadly hostility to scenic representation. The character must be supported solely by its intrinsic power. The judge, the footman, the clown, the lawyer, the belle, or the beau, can receive no great assistance from dress. Melo-dramas, except the scene should be laid in the woods, are out of the question. It would be necessary to seek the great clock, which is to strike the portentous twelve blows, in the nearest church; a vaulted passage would degenerate into a cellar; and, as for ghosts, the country was discovered, since their visitations have ceased. The smallest departure from the incidents of ordinary life would do violence to every man's experience; and, as already mentioned, the

<sup>12</sup> Jonathan Edwards.

<sup>13</sup> Although by this time Godfrey, Tyler, Dunlap, Payne, Barker, and Bird had written original plays that were performed, Cooper is right in saying that acting companies still depended chiefly upon English plays for their repertory.

<sup>14</sup> One of the three Greek orders of architecture.

<sup>15</sup> The Théâtre Français in Paris.

<sup>16</sup> George Frederick Cooke (1756-1811), an English actor, especially of Shakespearian roles.

passions which belong to human nature must be delineated, in America, subject to the influence of that despot—common sense.

Notwithstanding the overwhelming influence of British publications, and all the difficulties I have named, original books are getting to be numerous in

the United States. The impulses of talent and intelligence are bearing down a thousand obstacles. I think the new works will increase rapidly, and that they are destined to produce a powerful influence on the world. We will pursue this subject another time.—Adieu.

1828

FROM

*A Letter to His Countrymen* <sup>17</sup>

The private citizen who comes before the world with matter relating to himself, is bound to show a better reason for the measure than the voluntary impulses of self-love. In my own case, it might, perhaps, appear a sufficient excuse for the step now taken, that I am acting chiefly on the defensive; that the editors of several of the public journals have greatly exceeded their legitimate functions, by animadverting on my motives and private affairs; and that assertions, opinions, and acts, have been openly attributed to me, that I have never uttered, entertained, or done. When an individual is thus dragged into notice, the right of self-vindication would seem to depend on a principle of natural justice; and yet, if I know the springs of my own conduct, I am less influenced by any personal considerations in what I am now doing, than by a wish to check a practice that has already existed too long among us; which appears to me to be on the increase; and which, while it is degrading to the character, if persisted in, may become dangerous to the institutions of this country.

The practice of quoting the opinions of foreign nations, by way of helping to make up its own estimate of the degree of merit that belongs to its public men, is, I believe, a custom peculiar to America. That our colonial origin, and provincial habits, should have given rise to such a usage, is sufficiently natural; that journals which have a poverty of original matter, should have recourse to that which can be obtained not only gratuitously, but by an extraordinary convention, without loss of reputation, and without even

the necessity of a translation, need be no mystery; but the readiness with which the practice can be accounted for, will not, I think, prove its justification, if it can be shown that it is destructive of those sentiments of self-respect, and of that manliness and independence of thought, that are necessary to render a people great, or a nation respectable. Questions have now arisen between a portion of the press and myself, which give me more authority to speak in the matter than might belong to one whose name had not been so freely used, and it is my intention, while I endeavor to do myself justice, to make an effort to arrest the custom to which there is allusion; and which, should it continue to prevail, must render every American more or less subject to the views of those who are hostile to the prosperity, the character, and the power of his native land.

The habit of fostering this deference to foreign opinion is dangerous to the very institutions under which we live. This is the point at which I have aimed from the commencement; for, while I feel that every defender of the action of our own system is entitled to fair-play, I have never had the weakness to believe that any personal interests of my own are a matter of sufficient importance to others, to require a publication like the present.

The practice of deferring to foreign opinion is dangerous to the institutions of the country.

In order to render the case that I wish to present clear, it will be necessary to take a short review of the institutions themselves.

The government of the United States is a peculiar confederation of many different bodies politic, for specified objects embracing certain of the higher

<sup>17</sup> Originally published in New York and London in 1834.

These selections contain Cooper's contrast of American with European institutions and customs and are designed to offer his thoughts on what in America is needful for the promotion of literary independence and the achievement of a "distinctive American thought."



functions of sovereignty, and to which we have given the appropriate name of a Union. The action of this government is obtained by a system of representation which, while it is compound and complicated in its elements, possesses, in fact, the redeeming and essential quality of simplicity, by providing that none but common interests shall be subject to its control. And, yet, while we actually possess, under the provisions of the Constitution, the essential requisite of an *ensemble* in the legal operation and spirit of the institutions, nothing is easier than to create an antagonist action, by overstepping the limits of the compact. A single glance at the instrument itself will explain my meaning.

A Union, from its very nature, must be a representative form of government; but the mere circumstance that a government is representative by no means establishes its character, which depends on the fact of whom the parties are that are represented. Under our system, each State is the arbiter of its own constituency, subject to the single condition that its form of polity shall be that of a Republic. A republic is a government in which the executive power is not hereditary, or in which the laws are administered in the name of a Commonwealth instead of that of a Prince. Venice, Poland, Frankfort, Unterwalden, Berne and Connecticut, are or were all republics. New-York, in virtue of its reserved rights, has decided that its constituency shall be represented on the principle of universal suffrage. Virginia has a freehold qualification. Either of these States has a right to modify its representation as it shall think best for its own interests. In point of fact, it is true the states of this Union are nearly all democracies, but they have attained this near approach to harmony by their own acts; for, under the limitations of the Federal Constitution, it is quite within the legal competency of the several bodies corporate which compose the Union, to make that Union a representation of democracies, or of aristocracies, or of a mixture of both, by altering the characters of the respective constituencies. Did the government of the United States possess more minute powers, therefore, and were the States to exercise the privilege just mentioned, making their representations a mixture of aristocracies and democracies, disunion or revolution would inevitably follow. Although there are instances in which monarchies and aristocracies coalesce

in confederations for defined objects, as in Germany,<sup>18</sup> and in which aristocracies and democracies unite for the same purposes, there is no instance in history in which these antagonist principles have long existed, in the full exercise of equal powers, in the form of a consolidated community. The struggle between them has always produced revolution in fact, whatever may have been done in form. By studying, then, the danger of a union of great antagonist principles in a consolidated form of government, we are admonished to respect the conditions on which the possibility of their co-existence is admitted into our own system. Although Virginia, and certain other States, may possibly be termed representative democracies, when considered solely in reference to their white population, they are in truth, even now, mild aristocracies, when considered in reference to their whole population. Immaterial as the difference is in most cases between the polity of Virginia and that of New-York, there are some points of disagreement that sufficiently show how easy it is, by transcending the conditions of the Union, to awaken a spirit of hostility, and to endanger the existence of the compact that now binds them together. To these points of difference in principle may be added, as temporary causes of disunion, those interests which arise from difference of climate and productions.

Every government has two great classes of obstacles to contend with:—the propensities of human nature, and the difficulties that arise from its particular manner of controlling its own affairs. As the first is an evil that we share in common with all men, it may be dismissed without comment; but in the case of the second, it will be useful to allude here to one or two of these particular causes of embarrassment as they exist under our own system.

The first great difficulty with which this government has to contend, is, for reasons that are obvious, the accurate discrimination between the powers that are granted to the Union and those that are reserved by the states. The contests which may arise on these vital questions can give birth to the only true whigs and tories of America. The object of this Union was not simply government—this was possessed in the several states—but it was to extend a uniform sys-

<sup>18</sup> Germany was a loose confederation of states from 1815 to 1848.



tem over so large a space, as to reap the greatest benefit from its action.

It has been said by others that the advantages of the Union, while they are admitted to be of the last importance, are of a purely negative character. This, I apprehend, is little more than clothing a truism in pretending language. The object of society in general is to enjoy the advantages of association and protection; to say, therefore, that we should be worse off without the Union, is but another method of saying 10 that we are better off with it. In Europe, when the enemies of this system (and they are the friends of all others) are driven from position to position in the arguments that frequently occur between them and Americans, concerning the merits and probable duration of our polity, they uniformly raise the objection, "that your government is only a compromise." Every government is a compromise, or something worse. Every community that is not founded on such a principle must sacrifice some of its interests to others; 20 and, in our case, so far from believing that the mutual concessions that have been made in the compact of the Union are opposed to the true spirit of government, I shall contend that they are proofs that its real objects and just limitations were properly understood. Disputes have certainly occurred, originating in a diversity of employments; but we have not yet reached the period when all the ordinary interests of civilized society are properly balanced. When that period shall arrive, and it cannot be distant, I 30 think it will be found that this diversity of employments is an additional ligament to the Union. But, while no great weight is to be given to a mere diversity of employments, every attention is due to those feelings that enter into the daily habits and prejudices of men. In this country, facts greatly outrun opinion. This is one of the reasons that we see men looking behind them to Europe for precedents, instead of being willing to conduct their own affairs on their own principles. Had congress the right 40 to control those minute interests of society that touch the rooted practices of different sections of the Union, as they are now controlled by the state legislatures, the revenue of the Union would not be worth a year's purchase; for nothing but force would compel the Virginian and the Vermontese to submit to the same detail of social organization. In such a case we should quickly see the vicious influence of the adverse principles of democracy and aristocracy. Still,

the constitution of the United States contemplates the coexistence of these antagonist forces in our system, through the several states, and it fully admits of their representation, for it leaves to each community the power to decide on the character of its constituency. It follows as a corollary from the proposition, that either the framers of the constitution were guilty of the gross neglect of admitting into the government of the Union the seeds of its own destruction, or that they devised means to obviate the natural conflict between principles so irreconcilably hostile. They did the latter, by limiting the powers of the new government to the control of those interests that take the same general aspects under every form of civilized society, let the authority emanate from what sources it may. This provision, then, is our only safeguard, and while it is respected there is little serious ground to apprehend the downfall of the system; but as soon as innovation shall make any serious inroads on these sacred limits, the bond which unites us will be severed. From all this is to be inferred the immense importance of keeping the action of the general government most rigidly within its defined sphere, to the utter exclusion of all construction but that which is clearly and distinctly to be inferred by honest deductions of powers that are conceded in terms.

To the danger which awaits any departure from a severe interpretation of the constitution, as it is to be apprehended from the possibility, and indeed it might be added the actual existence of different elements in the federal constituency, may be added that which arises from the facility of action through the organized forms of the state governments. The latter, however, when considered as distinct from the difference in these elements themselves, is a danger that arises solely from the inherent vices and weaknesses of man. They may or they may not lead to evil, as circumstances shall direct; but the existence of antagonist principles, or of conflicting elements, in the construction of any government, *must lead to dissension*, unless some unusual preventive is devised. As has been seen, in our own case, the expedient is a limitation of powers.

The second embarrassment dependent on its own details, with which the federal government has to contend, is the possibility of an occasional want of concurrence in views and action between the different branches of the constituted authorities. This evil is

peculiar to our own form of polity. It does not exist in England, and is almost the only solid advantage which that country, in a political point of view, possesses over our own.

As I am aware there will be a disposition to cavil at many of these positions, I may be permitted a word in the way of explanation. It has been said that in no other form of government is there the same danger from temporary collisions between the different branches of power, as in our own. To this would probably be objected the examples of England, at certain periods of her history, of France, since the restoration, and of divers of what are called the constitutional states of Germany; such as Bavaria, Saxony, Wurtemberg, the Hessen and Nassau. As respects the latter, while they are included in the reasons about to be given in relation to the two others, the instances they afford are entitled to no respect, for they are all under the control of an external and a superior force. Austria, Prussia and Russia would interfere to coerce the people,\* and the knowledge of this fact only has probably prevented revolution in them all.

England, so far from being an exception to the ground just taken, affords the strongest proof of its justice. The revolution of 1668 [1688?] was owing to a struggle between the powers of the state. Previously to that period the prerogative was in the ascendant, and since that period it has been constantly on the wane, until it is completely annihilated as to all practical political authority. The laws are still administered in the name of the king it is true, his signature is necessary to certain acts, and he is yet called the head of the church and state; but aristocracy has cast its web about him with so much ingenuity, that the premier conducts his hand, the chancellor wields his conscience, and parliament feeds him, until he is reduced to the condition of a well dressed lay-figure. There undeniably was a contest between parliament and the prerogative during the four reigns that preceded the last, and the result goes to prove the very position I have taken. This contest has wrought the effects of revolution, perverting the government from a monarchy to an oligarchy. The entire authority of the state, even to that of dictating his ministers to the king, is virtually in the hands of

parliament. Open, palpable revolution has been carefully avoided, simply because the tendency of such convulsions is to elevate the low and to depress the great, and it was the wish of the aristocracy to effect its purpose by indirect means, and by the fictions of legality. The ascendancy of the thousand families who control the British empire has been obtained under the cry of liberty.

As the situation of France has not admitted of as much legal fraud as that of England, her example, since the restoration, is still more plainly in favor of the truth of our position. The contest between the crown and the chambers led Louis XVIII. to alter the charter; and a few years later, when opinion had gathered force, and legislation began to assume most of its ordinary attributes, his successor lost his crown, in making a similar attempt.

Thus far, in quoting the examples of the European states, it has been the intention to show merely the inevitable tendency of struggles between the executive and the legislature, considered in connexion with leading principles, and under the supposition that the constituency and the representation are of the same mind. In the cases of what are called in Europe representative governments, the eventual \* danger has been somewhat lessened, and the temporary inconvenience removed, by a very simple expedient. The crown has power to prorogue or dissolve the legislature. The reasons, therefore, why the embarrassment that arises from temporary collisions between the executive and the legislature is greater in America than in England or France, are to be found in the fact that the chambers can be dissolved, and the fact that should the new elections be adverse to those who wield the power of the crown, the chambers, in their turn, compel a change of ministers. The alternative, as was the case in France in 1830, is revolution. It is unnecessary to say that the executive of this country has no power to dissolve congress, or congress any power to dissolve a ministry. The inevitable consequences of the continuance of such collisions, viz. revolution, or changes equal in effect to revolution, is obviated only by the frequency of the elections.

\* France also might now be added to the list of those states that would directly, or indirectly, lend its influence to effect the same object.

\* In England the danger has been averted by virtually reducing all the powers of the government to one body. The constituency of England is, as to political effect, the property of the representation. In cases where the landlord does not control, the open vote gives the richest man nearly the certainty of being elected. The exceptions do not affect the rule.

We will return to our own polity.

It will be admitted that the government of the United States is one of the powers delegated for limited and defined purposes. Its authority is to be found only in the constitution. Precedent, as it is derived from our own practice, is valuable merely as it has been established on sound principles, and as it is derived from the practices of others, is to be received with a cautious examination into its fitness for our peculiar condition.

The highest authority known to the constitution, in its spirit, is the constituency. It sits in judgment over all, and approves or condemns at pleasure. All the branches of the deputed government, executive, legislative and judicial, are equally amenable to its decisions. It has retained the power of even changing the characters of its several servants; of placing the authority of the president in the hands of a committee of congress, or in any other depository it shall select; of dispensing with the judiciary altogether, or of modifying its duties at pleasure; of re-modelling the legislature and of issuing to it new commissions, as it shall see fit. The only restraint it has laid on its own acts, is a provision pointing out the form in which its will is to be expressed, and a solitary condition touching that delicate point of the rights of the several states, which secures to each an equal representation in the senate. When the constituency and the people are identical, this becomes political liberty.

The highest attributes of the constituency are delegated to the legislature, whose powers are as carefully and as distinctly defined, as the nature of things would well permit. The judiciary and the executive are, in a great degree, subordinate to the will of the latter, on which there is no restraint but the provisions of the compact, and from which, when legitimately exercised, there is no appeal but to the constituency. Its members act with no other responsibility than that which they owe to their own body, and to the judgments that may be passed upon their measures by those who issued their commissions. Unlike the executive and the judiciary, they are liable to no impeachment.\* When the irresponsible nature of such a power, divided as it is among many, is taken

in connexion with its extent, it is very obvious that far more danger is to be apprehended from the legislature, through innovations on the principles of the constitution under the forms of law, than from either of the two other branches of the government. They all exercise delegated powers, it is true, and powers that can be perverted from their legitimate uses; but congress is the least restrained, while it possesses the highest authority. It follows of necessity that it is the  
10 branch of this government most likely to abuse its trust.

Obvious as are these facts, what has just been said is not the popular manner of viewing the subject. The English aristocracy has so long been innovating on the prerogative of the crown, under the cry of liberty, and the *theory* of the English constitution has so artfully favored such a mystification, that we have caught the feeling of another country, and are apt to consider those to whom we have confided the  
20 greatest authority under the least responsibility, the exclusive guardians of our liberties! Such an opinion can only be entertained by a sacrifice of both fact and reason. The constituency is its own protector, or our pretension to real liberty would be idle. The executive is a creature of our own forming, and for our own good, and it is manifestly a weakness to confound him or his authority, with a prince and his prerogative, the latter being based on the divine right.

In a monarchy power is supposed to be the pre-  
30 rogative of the crown, and what is called liberty is no more than concessions obtained from the sovereign in behalf of the subject. Under really free institutions, government itself is no more than a concession of powers for the benefit of protection and association. It is very possible that these mutual concessions should produce an exactly similar set of subordinate ordinances or laws, and yet one government shall enjoy real freedom, and the other possess no more than its shadow. The essence of liberty is in the ultimate power to control, as residing in the body of the nation. Its form is exhibited through the responsibility of the public agents.

The inference that I could wish to draw from this brief statement is the absolute necessity of construing the Constitution of the United States on its own

judge, or the president? In countries in which the representative is either an advocate or a master, there is good cause for his impunity, but in ours, where he is only a servant, there is none.

\* This is an instance in which imitation has led us astray from the commencement. What sufficient reason can be given why the representative, in a system like ours, should not be tried and punished for an abuse of trust, as well as a

principles; of rigidly respecting the spirit as well as the letter of its provisions; and of never attempting to avert any evil which may arise under the practice of the government, in any other manner than that which is pointed out by the instrument itself. On no other terms can this Union be perpetuated, and on these terms, there is reason to believe that our prospect of national happiness and power exceeds that of any other people on the globe.

I came before you, as a writer, when the habit of looking to others for mental aliment most disqualified the public to receive a native author with favor. It has been said lately that I owe the little success I met with at home, to foreign approbation. This assertion is unjust to you. Accident first made me a writer, and the same accident gave a direction to the subject of my pen. Ashamed to have fallen into the track of imitation, I endeavored to repair the wrong done to my own views, by producing a work that should be purely American, and of which love of country should be the theme. This work most of you received with a generous welcome that might have satisfied any one that the heart of this great community is sound. It was only at a later day, when I was willing more obviously to substitute American *principles* for American *things*, that I was first made to feel how far opinion, according to my poor judgment, still lags in the rear of facts. The American who wishes to illustrate and enforce the peculiar principles of his own country, by the agency of polite literature, will, for a long time to come, I fear, find that *his* constituency, as to all purposes of distinctive thought, is still too much under the influence of foreign theories, to receive him with favor. It is under this conviction that I lay aside the pen.<sup>19</sup> I am

told that this step will be attributed to the language of the journals, and some of my friends are disposed to flatter me with the belief that the journals misrepresent the public sentiment. On this head, I can only say that, like others similarly situated, I must submit to any false inferences of this nature to which accident shall give birth. I am quite unconscious of giving any undue weight to the crudities of the daily press, and as to the press of this country in particular, a good portion of the hostility it has manifested to myself, is so plainly stamped with its origin, that it never gave me any other uneasiness, than that which belongs to the certainty that it must be backed by a strong public opinion, or men of this description would never have presumed to utter what they have. The information on which I act is derived from sources entitled to more respect than the declamations of the press.

I confess I have come to this decision with reluctance, for I had hoped to be useful in my generation, and to have yet done something which might have identified my name with those who are to come after me. But it has been ordered differently. I have never been very sanguine as to the immortality of what I have written, a very short period having always sufficed for my ambition; but I am not ashamed to avow, that I have felt a severe mortification that I am to break down on the question of distinctive American thought. Were it a matter of more than feeling, I trust I should be among the last to desert my post. But the democracy of this country is in every sense strong enough to protect itself. Here, the democrat is the conservative, and, thank God, he has something worth preserving. I believe he knows it, and that he will prove true to himself. I confess I have no great fears of our modern aristocracy, which is wanting in more of chivalry than the *accolade*.

<sup>19</sup> As eventualities proved, of course, Cooper was to write and publish voluminously for many years to come.

FROM

*The American Democrat*<sup>20</sup>An Aristocrat and a Democrat<sup>21</sup>

We live in an age, when the words aristocrat and democrat are much used, without regard to the real significations. An aristocrat is one of a few, who possess the political power of a country; a democrat, one of the many. The words are also properly applied to those who entertain notions favorable to aristocratical or democratical forms of government. Such persons are not, necessarily, either aristocrats, or 10 democrats in fact, but merely so in opinion. Thus a member of a democratical government may have an aristocratical bias, and *vice versa*.

To call a man who has the habits and opinions of a gentleman, an aristocrat, from that fact alone, is an abuse of terms, and betrays ignorance of the true principles of government, as well as of the world. It must be an equivocal freedom, under which every one is not the master of his own innocent acts and associations, and he is a sneaking democrat, indeed, 20 who will submit to be dictated to, in those habits over which neither law nor morality assumes a right of control.

Some men fancy that a democrat can only be one who seeks the level, social, mental and moral, of the majority, a rule that would at once exclude all men of refinement, education and taste from the class. These persons are enemies of democracy, as they at once render it impracticable. They are usually great sticklers for their own associations and habits, too, 30 though unable to comprehend any of a nature that are superior. They are, in truth, aristocrats in principle, though assuming a contrary pretension; the ground work of all their feelings and arguments being self. Such is not the intention of liberty, whose aim is to leave every man to be the master of his own acts; denying hereditary honors, it is true, as unjust and unnecessary, but not denying the inevitable consequences of civilization.

<sup>20</sup> The full title of this work as first published in Cooperstown in 1838 read *The American Democrat, or Hints on the Social and Civil Relations of the United States of America*.

<sup>21</sup> This selection is interesting as presenting Cooper's argument that the development of a gentlemanly class in America is not inconsistent with a democratic society or a republican form of government.

The law of God is the only rule of conduct, in this, as in other matters. Each man should do as he would be done by. Were the question put to the greatest advocate of indiscriminate association, whether he would submit to have his company and habits dictated to him, he would be one of the first to resist the tyranny; for they, who are the most rigid in maintaining their own claims, in such matters, are usually the loudest in decrying those whom they fancy to be better off than themselves. Indeed, it may be taken as a rule in social intercourse, that he who is the most apt to question the pretensions of others, is the most conscious of the doubtful position he himself occupies; thus establishing the very claims he affects to deny, by letting his jealousy of it be seen. Manners, education and refinement, are positive things, and they bring with them innocent tastes which are productive of high enjoyments; and it is as unjust to deny their possessors their indulgence, as it would be to insist on the less fortunate's passing the time they would rather devote to athletic amusements, in listening to operas for which they have no relish, sung in a language they do not understand.

All that democracy means, is as equal a participation in rights as is practicable; and to pretend that social equality is a condition of popular institutions, is to assume that the latter are destructive of civilization, for, as nothing is more self-evident than the impossibility of raising all men to the highest standard of tastes and refinement, the alternative would be to reduce the entire community to the lowest. The whole embarrassment on this point exists in the difficulty of making men comprehend qualities they do not themselves possess. We can all perceive the difference between ourselves and our inferiors, but when it comes to a question of the difference between us and our superiors, we fail to appreciate merits of which we have no proper conceptions. In face of this obvious difficulty, there is the safe and 40 just governing rule, already mentioned, or that of permitting every one to be the undisturbed judge of his own habits and associations, so long as they are innocent, and do not impair the rights of others to be equally judges for themselves. It follows, that

social intercourse must regulate itself, independently of institutions, with the exception that the latter, while they withhold no natural, bestow no factitious advantages beyond those which are inseparable from the rights of property, and general civilization.

In a democracy, men are just as free to aim at the highest attainable places in society, as to obtain the largest fortunes; and it would be clearly unworthy of all noble sentiment to say, that the grovelling competition for money shall alone be free, while that which enlists all the liberal acquirements and elevated sentiments of the race, is denied the democrat. Such an avowal would be at once, a declaration of the inferiority of the system, since nothing but ignorance and vulgarity could be its fruits.

The democratic gentleman must differ in many essential particulars, from the aristocratic gentleman, though in their ordinary habits and tastes they are virtually identical. Their principles vary; and, to a slight degree, their deportment accordingly. The democrat, recognizing the right of all to participate in power, will be more liberal in his general sentiments, a quality of superiority in itself; but, in conceding this much to his fellow man, he will proudly maintain his own independence of vulgar domination, as indispensable to his personal habits. The same principles and manliness that would induce him to depose a royal despot, would induce him to resist a vulgar tyrant.

There is no more capital, though more common error, than to suppose him an aristocrat who maintains his independence of habits; for democracy asserts the control of the majority, only, in matters of law, and not in matters of custom. The very object of the institution is the utmost practicable personal liberty, and to affirm the contrary, would be sacrificing the end to the means.

An aristocrat, therefore, is merely one who fortifies his exclusive privileges by positive institutions, and a democrat, one who is willing to admit of a free competition, in all things. To say, however, that the last supposes this competition will lead to nothing, is an assumption that means are employed without any reference to an end. He is the purest democrat who best maintains his rights, and no rights can be dearer to a man of cultivation, than exemptions from unseasonable invasions on his time, by the coarse-minded and ignorant.

### On the American Press<sup>22</sup>

The newspaper press of this country is distinguished from that of Europe in several essential particulars. While there are more prints, they are generally of a lower character. It follows that in all in which they are useful, their utility is more diffused through society, and in all in which they are hurtful, the injury they inflict is more wide-spread and corrupting.

The great number of newspapers in America, is a cause of there being so little capital, and consequently so little intelligence, employed in their management. It is also a reason of the inexactitude of much of the news they circulate. It requires a larger investment of capital than is usual in this country, to obtain correct information; while, on the other hand, the great competition renders editors reckless and impatient to fill their columns. To these circumstances may be added the greater influence of vague and unfounded rumours in a vast and thinly settled country, than on a compact population, covering a small surface.

Discreet and observing men have questioned, whether, after excluding the notices of deaths and marriages, one half of the circumstances that are related in the newspapers of America, as facts, are true in their essential features; and, in cases connected with party politics, it may be questioned if 30 even so large a proportion can be set down as accurate.

This is a terrible picture to contemplate, for when the number of prints is remembered, and the avidity with which they are read is brought into the account, we are made to perceive that the entire nation, in a moral sense, breathes an atmosphere of falsehoods. There is little use, however, in concealing the truth; on the contrary, the dread in which public men and writers commonly stand of the power of the press to injure them, has permitted the evil to extend so far, that it is scarcely exceeding the bounds of a just alarm, to say that the country cannot much longer exist in safety, under the malign influence that now overshadows it. Any one, who has lived long enough to note changes of the sort, must have perceived how

<sup>22</sup> Illuminating by way of indicating Cooper's opinion of the American press immediately after he launched his first lawsuit against the local Cooperstown editors, but before he initiated the long series of libel suits against the New York editors, which ran from 1839 to 1845.

fast men of probity and virtue are loosing [*sic*] their influence in the country, to be superseded by those who scarcely deem an affectation of the higher qualities necessary to their success. This fearful change must, in a great measure, be ascribed to the corruption of the publick press, which, as a whole, owes its existence to the schemes of interested political adventurers.

Those who are little acquainted with the world are apt to imagine that a fact, or an argument, that is stated publicly in print, is entitled to more credit and respect than the same fact or argument presented orally, or in conversation. So far from this being true, however, in regard to the press of this country, it would be safer to infer the very reverse. Men who are accustomed daily to throw off their misstatements, become reckless of the consequences, and he who would hesitate about committing himself by an allegation made face to face, and as it were on his personal responsibility, would indite a paragraph, behind the impersonality of his editorial character, to be uttered to the world in the irresponsible columns of a journal. It is seldom, in cases which admit of doubt, that men are required to speak on the moment; but, with the compositor in waiting, the time pressing, and the moral certainty that a rival establishment will circulate the questionable statement if he decline, the editor too often throws himself into the breach. The contradiction of today, will make a paragraph, as well as the lie of yesterday, though he who sees the last and not the first, unless able to appreciate the character of his authority, carries away an untruth.

Instead of considering the editor of a newspaper, as an abstraction, with no motive in view but that of maintaining principles and disseminating facts, it is necessary to remember that he is a man, with all the interests and passions of one who has chosen this means to advance his fortunes, and of course, with all the accompanying temptations to abuse his opportunities, and this too, usually, with the additional draw-back of being a partisan in politics, religion, or literature. If the possession of power, in ordinary cases, is a constant inducement to turn it to an unjust profit, it is peculiarly so in the extraordinary case of the control of a public press.

Editors praise their personal friends, and abuse their enemies in print, as private individuals praise their friends, and abuse their enemies with their

tongues. Their position increases the number of each, and the consequence is, that the readers obtain inflated views of the first, and unjust notions of the last.

If newspapers are useful in overthrowing tyrants, it is only to establish a tyranny of their own. The press tyrannizes over publick men, letters, the arts, the stage, and even over private life. Under the pretence of protecting publick morals, it is corrupting them to the core, and under the semblance of maintaining liberty, it is gradually establishing a despotism as ruthless, as grasping, and one that is quite as vulgar as that of any christian state known. With loud professions of freedom of opinion, there is no tolerance; with a parade of patriotism, no sacrifice of interests; and with fulsome panegyrics on propriety, too frequently, no decency.

There is but one way of extricating the mind from the baneful influence of the press of this country, and that is by making a rigid analysis of its nature and motives. By remembering that all statements that involve disputed points are *ex parte*; that there is no impersonality, except in professions; that all the ordinary passions and interests act upon its statements with less than the ordinary responsibilities; and that there is the constant temptation to abuse, which ever accompanies power, one may come, at last, to a just appreciation of its merits, and in a degree, learn to neutralize its malignant influence. But this is a freedom of mind that few attain, for few have the means of arriving at these truths!

The admixture of truth and falsehood in the intelligence circulated by the press, is one of the chief causes of its evils. A journal that gave utterance to nothing but untruths, would loose [*sic*] its influence with its character, but there are none so ignorant as not to see the necessity of occasionally issuing truths. It is only in cases in which the editor has a direct interest to the contrary, in which he has not the leisure or the means of ascertaining facts, or in which he is himself misled by the passions, cupidity and interests of others, that untruths find a place in his columns. Still these instances may, perhaps, include a majority of the cases.

In a country like this, it is indispensable to mental independence, that every man should have a clear perception of the quality of the political news, and of the political opinions circulated by the press, for, he who confides implicitly to its statements is yield-

ing himself blindly to either the designed and exaggerated praises of friends, or to the calculated abuse of opponents. As no man is either as good, or as bad, as vulgar report makes him, we can, at once, see the value that ought to be given to such statements.

All representations that dwell wholly on merits, or on faults, are to be distrusted, since none are perfect, and it may, perhaps, be added, none utterly without some redeeming qualities.

Whenever the papers unite to commend, without qualification, it is safe to believe in either venality, or a disposition to defer to a preconceived notion of excellence, most men choosing to float with the current, rather than to resist it, when no active motive urges a contrary course, feeding falsehood, because it flatters a predilection; and whenever censure is general and sweeping, one may be almost certain it is exaggerated and false.

Puffs, political, literary, personal and national, can commonly be detected by their *ex parte* statements, as may be their counterpart, detraction. Dishonesty of intention is easily discovered by the man of the world, in both, by the tone; and he who blindly receives either eulogium or censure, because they stand audaciously in print, demonstrates that his judgment is still in its infancy.

Authors review themselves, or friends are employed to do it for them; political adventurers have their dependents, who build their fortunes on those of their patrons; artists, players, and even religionists, are not above having recourse to such expedients to advance their interests and reputation. The world would be surprised to learn the tyranny that the press has exercised, in our own times, over some of the greatest modern names, few men possessing the manliness and moral courage that are necessary to resist its oppression.

The people that has overturned the throne of a monarch, and set up a government of opinion in its stead, and which blindly yields its interests to the designs of those who would rule through the instrumentality of newspapers, has only exchanged one form of despotism for another.

It is often made a matter of boasting, that the United States contain so many public journals. It were wiser to make it a cause of mourning, since the quality, in this instance, diminishes in an inverse ratio to the quantity.

Another reason may be found for the deleterious influence of the American press, in the peculiar physical condition of the country. In all communities, the better opinion, whether as relates to moral or scientific truths, tastes, manners and facts, is necessarily in the keeping of a few; the great majority of mankind being precluded by their opportunities from reaching so high in the mental scale. The proportion between the intelligent and whole numbers, after making a proper allowance on account of the differences in civilization, is probably as great in this country, as in any other; possibly it is greater among the males; but the great extent of the territory prevents its concentration, and consequently, weakens its influence. Under such circumstances, the press has less to contend with than in other countries, where designing and ignorant men would stand rebuked before the collected opinion of those who, by their characters and information, are usually too powerful to be misled by vulgarity, sophistry and falsehood. Another reason is to be found in the popular character of the government, bodies of men requiring to be addressed in modes suited to the average qualities of masses.

In America, while the contest was for great principles, the press aided in elevating the common character, in improving the common mind, and in maintaining the common interests; but, since the contest has ceased, and the struggle has become one purely of selfishness and personal interests, it is employed, as a whole, in fast undermining its own work, and in preparing the nation for some terrible reverses, if not in calling down upon it, a just judgment of God.

As the press of this country now exists, it would seem to be expressly devised by the great agent of mischief, to depress and destroy all that is good, and to elevate and advance all that is evil in the nation. The little truth that is urged, is usually urged coarsely, weakened and rendered vicious, by personalities; while those who live by falsehoods, fallacies, enmities, partialities and the schemes of the designing, find the press the very instrument that the devils would invent to effect their designs.

A witty but unprincipled statesman of our own times, has said that "speech was bestowed on man to conceal his thoughts;" judging from its present condition, he might have added, "and the press to pervert truth."



## Conclusion

The inferences to be drawn from the foregoing<sup>23</sup> reasons and facts, admitting both to be just, may be briefly summed up as follows.

No expedients can equalize the temporal lots of men; for without civilization and government, the strong would oppress the weak, and, with them, an inducement to exertion must be left, by bestowing rewards on talents, industry and success. All that the best institutions, then, can achieve, is to remove useless obstacles, and to permit merit to be the artisan of its own fortune, without always degrading demerit to the place it ought naturally to fill.

Every human excellence is merely comparative, there being no good without alloy. It is idle therefore to expect a system that shall exhibit faultlessness, or perfection.

The terms liberty, equality, right and justice, used in a political sense, are merely terms of convention, and of comparative excellence, there being no such thing, in practice, as either of these qualities being carried out purely, according to the abstract notions of theories.

The affairs of life embrace a multitude of interests, and he who reasons on any one of them, without consulting the rest, is a visionary unsuited to control the business of the world.

There is a prevalent disposition in the designing to forget the means in the end, and on the part of the mass to overlook the result in the more immediate agencies. The first is the consequence of cupidity; the last of short-sightedness, and frequently of the passions. Both these faults need be vigilantly watched in a democracy, as the first unsettles principles while it favors artifice, and the last is substituting the transient motives of a day, for the deliberate policy and collected wisdom of ages.

Men are the constant dupes of names, while their happiness and well-being mainly depend on things. The highest proof a community can give of its fitness for self government, is its readiness in distinguishing between the two; for frauds, oppression, flattery and vice, are the offspring of the mistakes.

It is a governing principle of nature, that the agency which can produce most good, when perverted from its proper aim, is most productive of evil.

<sup>23</sup> Preceding sections dealt with Cooper's thoughts "On Property," "On Universal Suffrage," and "On Slavery."

It behooves the well-intentioned, therefore, vigilantly to watch the tendency of even their most highly prized institutions, since that which was established in the interests of the right, may so easily become the agent of the wrong.

The disposition of all power is to abuses, nor does it at all mend the matter that its possessors are a majority. Unrestrained political authority, though it be confided to masses, cannot be trusted without positive limitations, men in bodies being but an aggregation of the passions, weaknesses and interests of men as individuals.

It is as idle to expect what is termed gratitude, in a democracy, as from any other repository of power. Bodies of men, though submitting to human impulses generally, and often sympathetic as well as violent, are seldom generous. In matters that touch the common feeling, they are avaricious of praise, and they usually visit any want of success in a publick man, as a personal wrong. Thus it is that we see a dozen victories forgotten in a single defeat, an irritable vanity in the place of a masculine pride, and a sensitiveness to opinion, instead of a just appreciation of acts.

Under every system it is more especially the office of the prudent and candid to guard against the evils peculiar to that particular system, than to declaim against the abuses of others. Thus, in a democracy, instead of decrying monarchs and aristocrats, who are impotent, it is wiser to look into the sore spots of the only form of government that can do any practical injury, and to apply the necessary remedies, than to be glorifying ourselves at the expense of charity, common sense, and not unfrequently of truth.

Life is made up of positive things, the existence of which it is not only folly, but which it is often unsafe to deny. Nothing is gained by setting up impracticable theories, but alienating opinion from the facts under which we live, all the actual distinctions that are inseparable from the possession of property, learning, breeding, refinement, tastes and principles, existing as well in one form of government, as in another; the only difference between ourselves and other nations, in this particular, lying in the fact that there are no other artificial distinctions than those that are inseparable from the recognized principles and indispensable laws of civilization.

There is less real inequality in the condition of

men than outward circumstances would give reason to believe. If refinement brings additional happiness, it also adds point to misery. Fortunately, the high consolations of religion, in which lies the only lasting and true relief from the cares and seeming injustice

of the world, are equally attainable, or, if there be a disadvantage connected with this engrossing interest, it is against those whose lots are vulgarly supposed to be the most desirable.

1838

### *Preface to The Leatherstocking Tales* <sup>24</sup>

This series of Stories, which has obtained the name of "The Leather-Stocking Tales," has been written in a very desultory and inartificial manner. The order in which the several books appeared was essentially different from that in which they would have been presented to the world, had the regular course of their incidents been consulted. In the *Pioneers*, the first of the series written, the Leather-Stocking is represented as already old, and driven from his early haunts in the forest, by the sound of the axe, and the smoke of the settler. "The Last of the Mohicans," the next book in the order of publication, carried the readers back to a much earlier period in the history of our hero, representing him as middle-aged, and in the fullest vigor of manhood. In the *Prairie*, his career terminates, and he is laid in his grave. There, it was originally the intention to leave him, in the expectation that, as in the case of the human mass, he would soon be forgotten. But a latent regard for this character induced the author to resuscitate him in "The Pathfinder," a book that was not long after succeeded by "The Deerslayer," thus completing the series as it now exists.

While the five books that have been written were originally published in the order just mentioned, that of the incidents, inasmuch as they are connected with the career of their principal character, is, as has been stated, very different. Taking the life of the Leather-Stocking as a guide, "The Deerslayer" should have been the opening book, for in that work he is seen just emerging into manhood; to be succeeded by "The Last of the Mohicans," "The Pathfinder," "The Pioneers," and "The Prairie." This arrangement embraces the order of events, though far from being that in which the books at first appeared. "The *Pioneers*" was published in 1822; "The Deerslayer" in 1841; making the interval between them nineteen

years. Whether these progressive years have had a tendency to lessen the value of the last-named book by lessening the native fire of its author, or of adding somewhat in the way of improved taste and a more matured judgment, is for others to decide.

If anything from the pen of the writer of these romances is at all to outlive himself, it is, unquestionably, the series of "The Leather-Stocking Tales." To say this, is not to predict a very lasting reputation for the series itself, but simply to express the belief it will outlast any, or all, of the works from the same hand.

It is undeniable that the desultory manner in which "The Leather-Stocking Tales" were written, has, in a measure, impaired their harmony, and otherwise lessened their interest. This is proved by the fate of the two books last published, though probably the two most worthy an enlightened and cultivated reader's notice. If the facts could be ascertained, it is probable the result would show that of all those (in America, in particular) who have read the three first books of the series, not one in ten has a knowledge of the existence even of the two last. Several causes have tended to produce this result. The long interval of time between the appearance of "The *Prairie*" and that of "The *Pathfinder*," was itself a reason why the later books of the series should be overlooked. There was no longer novelty to attract attention, and the interest was materially impaired by the manner in which events were necessarily anticipated, in laying the last of the series first before the world. With the generation that is now coming on the stage this fault will be partially removed by the edition contained in the present work, in which the several tales will be arranged solely in reference to their connexion with each other.

The author has often been asked if he had any original in his mind, for the character of Leather-Stocking. In a physical sense, different individuals known to the writer in early life, certainly presented

<sup>24</sup> This preface was written especially for the new edition of Cooper's novels brought out by Putnam's in New York during 1849-1850.

themselves as models, through his recollections; but in a moral sense this man of the forest is purely a creation. The idea of delineating a character that possessed little of civilization but its highest principles as they are exhibited in the uneducated, and all of savage life that is not incompatible with these great rules of conduct, is perhaps natural to the situation in which Natty was placed. He is too proud of his origin to sink into the condition of the wild Indian, and too much a man of the woods not to imbibe as much as was at all desirable, from his friends and companions. In a moral point of view it was the intention to illustrate the effect of seed scattered by the way side. To use his own language, his "gifts" were "white gifts," and he was not disposed to bring on them discredit. On the other hand, removed from nearly all the temptations of civilized life, placed in the best associations of that which is deemed savage, and favorably disposed by nature to improve such advantages, it appeared to the writer that his hero was a fit subject to represent the better qualities of both conditions, without pushing either to extremes.

There was no violent stretch of the imagination, perhaps, in supposing one of civilized associations in childhood, retaining many of his earliest lessons amid the scenes of the forest. Had these early impressions, however, not been sustained by continued, though casual connexion with men of his own color, if not of his own caste, all our information goes to show he would soon have lost every trace of his origin. It is believed that sufficient attention was paid to the particular circumstances in which this individual was placed to justify the picture of his qualities that has been drawn. The Delawares early attracted the attention of missionaries, and were a tribe unusually influenced by their precepts and example. In many instances they became Christians, and cases occurred in which their subsequent lives gave proof of the efficacy of the great moral changes that had taken place within them.

A leading character in a work of fiction has a fair right to the aid which can be obtained from a poetical view of the subject. It is in this view, rather than in one more strictly circumstantial, that Leather-Stocking has been drawn. The imagination has no great task in portraying to itself a being removed from the every-day inducements to err, which abound in civilized life, while he retains the best and simplest of his

early impressions; who sees God in the forest; hears him in the winds; bows to him in the firmament that o'ercanopies all; submits to his sway in a humble belief of his justice and mercy; in a word, a being who finds the impress of the Deity in all the works of nature, without any of the blots produced by the expedients, and passion, and mistakes of man. This is the most that has been attempted in the character of Leather-Stocking. Had this been done without any of the drawbacks of humanity, the picture would have been, in all probability, more pleasing than just. In order to preserve the *vrai-semblable*, therefore, traits derived from the prejudices, tastes, and even the weaknesses of his youth, have been mixed up with these higher qualities and longings, in a way, it is hoped, to represent a reasonable picture of human nature, without offering to the spectator a "monster of goodness."

It has been objected to these books that they give a more favorable picture of the red man than he deserves. The writer apprehends that much of this objection arises from the habits of those who have made it. One of his critics, on the appearance of the first work in which Indian character was portrayed, objected that its "characters were Indians of the school of Heckewelder,"<sup>25</sup> rather than of the school of nature." These words quite probably contain the substance of the true answer to the objection. Heckewelder was an ardent, benevolent missionary, bent on the good of the red man, and seeing in him one who had the soul, reason, and characteristics of a fellow-being. The critic is understood to have been a very distinguished agent of the government, one very familiar with Indians, as they are seen at the councils to treat for the sale of their lands, where little or none of their domestic qualities come in play, and where, indeed, their evil passions are known to have the fullest scope. As just would it be to draw conclusions of the general state of American society from the scenes of the capital, as to suppose that the negotiating of one of these treaties is a fair picture of Indian life.

It is the privilege of all writers of fiction, more particularly when their works aspire to the elevation of romances, to present the *beau-idéal* of their characters

<sup>25</sup> A reference to the Rev. John Heckewelder's *Account of the History, Manners, and Customs of the Indian Nations who once Inhabited Pennsylvania and the Neighboring States* (1819), Cooper's chief source of information concerning Indians, of whom he knew little or nothing at first hand.

to the reader. This it is which constitutes poetry, and to suppose that the red man is to be represented only in the squalid misery or in the degraded moral state that certainly more or less belongs to his condition,

is, we apprehend, taking a very narrow view of an author's privileges. Such criticism would have deprived the world of even Homer.

1850

FROM

*The Deerslayer* <sup>26</sup>

## [Deerslayer's Escape]

## CHAPTER XXVII

*Thou hast been busy, Death, this day, and yet  
But half thy work is done! The gates of hell  
Are thronged, yet twice ten thousand spirits more,  
Who, from their warm and healthful tenements,  
Fear no divorce, must, ere the sun go down,  
Enter the world of woe!*

SOUTHEY

One experienced in the signs of the heavens would have seen that the sun wanted but two or three minutes of the zenith, when Deerslayer landed on the point where the Hurons were now encamped, nearly abreast of the castle. This spot was similar to the one already described, with the exception that the surface of the land was less broken and less crowded with trees. Owing to these two circumstances, it was all the better suited to the purpose for which it had been selected, the space beneath the branches bearing some resemblance to a densely wooded lawn. Favored by its position and its spring, it had been much resorted to by savages and hunters, and the natural grasses had succeeded their fires, leaving an appearance of sward in places, a very unusual accompaniment of the virgin forest. Nor was the margin of water fringed with bushes, as on so much of its shore, but the eye <sup>20</sup> penetrated the woods immediately on reaching the strand, commanding nearly the whole area of the projection.

If it was a point of honor with the Indian warrior to redeem his word when pledged to return and meet his death at a given hour, so was it a point of char-

<sup>26</sup> The Leatherstocking tales are too long, their action is too involved or crowded, and the author's manner of telling his story is too prolix to permit extended reproduction in a book of this kind. Such summaries or synopses as can be made of a story like *The Deerslayer* are either too circumstantial or so abbreviated as to be of little use. However, the four chapters here reprinted not only relate typical adventures but form a connected story, complete enough within itself to afford interesting reading. New characters introduced and antecedent events are sufficiently explained as the story progresses to clarify themselves.

acteristic pride to show no womanish impatience, but to reappear as nearly as possible at the appointed moment. It was well not to exceed the grace accorded by the generosity of the enemy, but it was better to meet it to a minute. Something of this dramatic effect mingles with most of the graver usages of the American aborigines, and no doubt, like the prevalence of a similar feeling among people more sophisticated and refined, may be referred to a principle of nature. We all love the wonderful, and when it comes attended by chivalrous self-devotion and a rigid regard to honor, it presents itself to our admiration in a shape doubly attractive. As respects Deerslayer, though he took a pride in showing his white blood by often deviating from the usages of the red-men, he frequently dropped into their customs, and oftener into their feelings, unconsciously to himself, in consequence of having no other arbiters to appeal to than their judgments and tastes. On the present occasion, he would have abstained from betraying a feverish haste by a too speedy return, since it would have contained a tacit admission that the time asked for was more than had been wanted; but, on the other hand, had the idea occurred to him, he would have quickened his movements a little, in order to avoid the dramatic appearance of returning at the precise instant set as the utmost limit of his absence. Still, accident had interfered to defeat the last intention, for when the young man put his foot on the point, and advanced with a steady tread towards the group of chiefs that was seated in grave array on a fallen tree, the oldest of their number cast his eye upward at an opening in the trees, and pointed out to his companions the startling fact that the sun was just entering a space that was known to mark the zenith. A common but low exclamation of surprise and admiration escaped every mouth, and the grim warriors looked at each other; some with envy and disappointment, some with astonishment, at the pre-

cise accuracy of their victim, and others with a more generous and liberal feeling. The American Indian always deemed his moral victories the noblest, prizing the groans and yielding of his victim under torture more than the trophy of his scalp; and the trophy itself more than his life. To slay, and not to bring off the proof of victory, indeed, was scarcely deemed honorable; even these rude and fierce tenants of the forest, like their more nurtured brethren of the court, and the camp, having set up for themselves imaginary and arbitrary points of honor, to supplant the conclusions of the right and the decisions of reason.

The Hurons had been divided in their opinions concerning the probability of their captive's return. Most of them, indeed, had not expected it possible for a pale-face to come back voluntarily, and meet the known penalties of an Indian torture; but a few of the seniors expected better things from one who had already shown himself so singularly cool, brave, and upright. The party had come to its decision, however, less in the expectation of finding the pledge redeemed, than in the hope of disgracing the Delawares by casting into their teeth the delinquency of one bred in their villages. They would have greatly preferred that Chingachgook should be their prisoner, and prove the traitor; but the pale-face scion of the hated stock was no bad substitute for their purposes, failing in their designs against the ancient stem. With a view to render the triumph as signal as possible, in the event of the hour's passing without the reappearance of the hunter, all the warriors and scouts of the party had been called in; and the whole band, men, women, and children, was now assembled at this single point, to be a witness of the expected scene. As the castle was in plain view, and by no means distant, it was easily watched by daylight; and it being thought that its inmates were now limited to Hurry, the Delaware, and the two girls, no apprehensions were felt of their being able to escape unseen. A large raft, having a breastwork of logs, had been prepared, and was in actual readiness to be used against either ark or castle, as occasion might require, so soon as the fate of Deerslayer was determined; the seniors of the party having come to the opinion that it was getting to be hazardous to delay their departure for Canada beyond the coming night. In short, the band waited merely to dispose of this single affair, ere it brought matters to a crisis, and prepared to

commence its retreat towards the distant waters of Ontario.

It was an imposing scene into which Deerslayer now found himself advancing. All the older warriors were seated on the trunk of the fallen tree, waiting his approach with grave decorum. On the right stood the young men, armed, while the left was occupied by the women and children. In the center was an open space of considerable extent, always canopied by leaves, but from which the underbrush, dead wood, and other obstacles had been carefully removed. The more open area had probably been much used by former parties, for this was the place where the appearance of a sward was the most decided. The arches of the woods, even at high noon, cast their somber shadows on the spot, which the brilliant rays of the sun that struggled through the leaves contributed to mellow, and, if such an expression can be used, to illuminate. It was probably from a similar scene that the mind of man first got its idea of the effects of Gothic tracery and churchly hues; this temple of nature producing some such effect, so far as light and shadows were concerned, as the well-known offspring of human invention.

As was not unusual among the tribes and wandering bands of the aborigines, two chiefs shared, in nearly equal degrees, the principal and primitive authority that was wielded over these children of the forest. There were several who might claim the distinction of being chief men, but the two in question were so much superior to all the rest in influence, that, when they agreed, no one disputed their mandates; and when they were divided, the band hesitated, like men who had lost their governing principle of action. It was also in conformity with practice—perhaps we might add in conformity with nature—that one of the chiefs was indebted to his mind for his influence, whereas the other owed his distinction altogether to qualities that were physical. One was a senior, well known for eloquence in debate, wisdom in council, and prudence in measures; while his great competitor, if not his rival, was a brave, distinguished in war, notorious for ferocity, and remarkable, in the way of intellect, for nothing but the cunning and expedients of the warpath. The first was Rivenoak, who has already been introduced to the reader, while the last was called le Panthère, in the language of the Canadas; or the Panther, to resort to the vernacular of the English colonies. The ap-

pellation of the fighting chief was supposed to indicate the qualities of the warrior, agreeably to a practice of the red-man's nomenclature; ferocity, cunning, and treachery being, perhaps, the distinctive features of his character. The title had been received from the French, and was prized so much the more from that circumstance, the Indian submitting profoundly to the greater intelligence of his pale-face allies in most things of this nature. How well the *sobriquet* was merited, will be seen in the sequel.

Rivenoak and the Panther sat side by side, awaiting the approach of their prisoner, as Deerslayer put his moccasined foot on the strand; nor did either move, or utter a syllable, until the young man had advanced into the center of the area, and proclaimed his presence with his voice. This was done firmly, though in the simple manner that marked the character of the individual.

"Here I am, Mingos," he said, in the dialect of the Delawares, a language that most present understood; 20 "here I am, and there is the sun. One is not more true to the laws of natur', than the other has proved true to his word. I am your prisoner; do with me what you please. My business with man and 'arth is settled; nothing remains now but to meet the white man's God, accordin' to a white man's duties and gifts."

A murmur of approbation escaped even the women at this address, and, for an instant there was a strong and pretty general desire to adopt into the tribe one 30 who owned so brave a spirit. Still there were dissenters from this wish, among the principal of whom might be classed the Panther, and his sister, le Sumach, so called from the number of her children, who was the widow of le Loup Cervier, now known to have fallen by the hand of the captive. Native ferocity held one in subjection, while the corroding passion of revenge prevented the other from admitting any gentler feeling at the moment. Not so with Rivenoak. This chief arose, stretched his arm before 40 him in a gesture of courtesy, and paid his compliments with an ease and dignity that a prince might have envied. As, in that band, his wisdom and eloquence were confessedly without rivals, he knew that on himself would properly fall the duty of first replying to the speech of the pale-face.

"Pale-face, you are honest," said the Huron orator. "My people are happy in having captured a man, and not a skulking fox. We now know you; we shall

treat you like a brave. If you have slain one of our warriors, and helped to kill others, you have a life of your own ready to give away in return. Some of my young men thought that the blood of a pale-face was too thin; that it would refuse to run under the Huron knife. You will show them it is not so; your heart is stout as well as your body. It is a pleasure to make such a prisoner; should my warriors say that the death of le Loup Cervier ought not to be 10 forgotten, and that he cannot travel towards the land of spirits alone, that his enemy must be sent to overtake him, they will remember that he fell by the hand of a brave, and send you after him with such signs of our friendship as shall not make him ashamed to keep your company. I have spoken; you know what I have said."

"True enough, Mingo, all true as the gospel," returned the simple-minded hunter; "you *have* spoken, and I *do* know not only what you have *said*, but, what is still more important, what you *mean*. I dare to say your warrior the Lynx, was a stouthcarted brave, and worthy of your fri'ndship and respect, but I do not feel unworthy to keep his company without any passport from your hands. Nevertheless, here I am, ready to receive judgment from your council, if, indeed, the matter was not determined among you afore I got back."

"My old men would not sit in council over a pale-face until they saw him among them," answered Rivenoak, looking around him a little ironically; "they said it would be like sitting in council over the winds; they go where they will, and come back as they see fit, and not otherwise. There was one voice that spoke in your favor, Deerslayer, but it was alone, like the song of the wren whose mate has been struck by the hawk."

"I thank that voice, whos'ever it may have been, Mingo, and will say it was as true a voice as the rest were lying voices. A furlough is as binding on a pale-face, if he be honest, as it is on a red-skin; and was it not so, I would never bring disgrace on the Delawares, among whom I may be said to have received my education. But words are useless and lead to braggin' feclin's; here I am; act your will on me."

Rivenoak made a sign of acquiescence, and then a short conference was privately held among the chiefs. As soon as the latter ended, three or four young men fell back from among the armed group, and disappeared. Then it was signified to the pris-

oner that he was at liberty to go at large on the point, until a council was held concerning his fate. There was more of seeming than of real confidence, however, in this apparent liberality, inasmuch as the young men mentioned already formed a line of sentinels across the breadth of the point, inland, and escape from any other part was out of the question. Even the canoe was removed beyond this line of sentinels, to a spot where it was considered safe from any sudden attempt. These precautions did not proceed from a failure of confidence, but from the circumstance that the prisoner had now complied with all the required conditions of his parole, and it would have been considered a commendable and honorable exploit to escape from his foes. So nice, indeed, were the distinctions drawn by the savages, in cases of this nature, that they often gave their victims a chance to evade the torture, deeming it as creditable to the captors to overtake, or to outwit a fugitive, when his exertions were supposed to be quickened by the extreme jeopardy of his situation, as it was for him to get clear from so much extraordinary vigilance.

Nor was Deerslayer unconscious of, or forgetful of, his rights and of his opportunities. Could he now have seen any probable opening for an escape, the attempt would not have been delayed a minute. But the case seemed desperate. He was aware of the line of sentinels, and felt the difficulty of breaking through it unharmed. The lake offered no advantages, as the canoe would have given his foes the greatest facilities for overtaking him; else would he have found it no difficult task to swim as far as the castle. As he walked about the point, he even examined the spot to ascertain if it offered no place of concealment; but its openness, its size, and the hundred watchful glances that were turned towards him, even while those who made them affected not to see him, prevented any such expedient from succeeding. The dread and disgrace of failure had no influence on Deerslayer, who deemed it ever a point of honor to reason and feel like a white man rather than as an Indian, and who felt it a sort of duty to do all he could, that did not involve a dereliction from principle, in order to save his life. Still he hesitated about making the effort, for he also felt that he ought to see the chance of success before he committed himself.

In the meantime the business of the camp ap-

peared to proceed in its regular train. The chiefs consulted apart, admitting no one but the Sumach to their councils; for she, the widow of the fallen warrior, had an exclusive right to be heard on such an occasion. The young men strolled about in indolent listlessness, awaiting the result with Indian patience, while the females prepared the feast that was to celebrate the termination of the affair, whether it proved fortunate, or otherwise, for our hero. No one betrayed feeling; and an indifferent observer, beyond the extreme watchfulness of the sentinels, would have detected no extraordinary movement or sensation to denote the real state of things. Two or three old women put their heads together, and, it appeared, unfavorably to the prospect of Deerslayer, by their scowling looks and angry gestures; but a group of Indian girls were evidently animated by a different impulse, as was apparent by stolen glances that expressed pity and regret. In this condition of the camp, an hour soon glided away.

Suspense is, perhaps, the feeling, of all others, that is most difficult to be supported. When Deerslayer landed, he fully, in the course of a few minutes, expected to undergo the tortures of an Indian revenge, and he was prepared to meet his fate manfully; but the delay proved far more trying than the nearer approach of suffering, and the intended victim began seriously to meditate some desperate effort at escape, as it might be from sheer anxiety to terminate the scene, when he was suddenly summoned to appear, once more, in front of his judges, who had already arranged the band in its former order, in readiness to receive him.

"Killer of the Deer," commenced Rivenoak, as soon as his captive stood before him, "my aged men have listened to wise words; they are ready to speak. You are a man whose fathers came from beyond the rising sun; we are children of the setting sun; we turn our faces towards the Great Sweet Lakes, when we look towards our villages. It may be a wise country and full of riches, towards the morning; but it is very pleasant towards the evening. We love most to look in that direction. When we gaze at the east, we feel afraid, canoe after canoe bringing more and more of your people in the track of the sun, as if their land was so full as to run over. The red-men are few already; they have need of help. One of our best lodges has lately been emptied by the death of its master; it will be a long time before his son can grow



big enough to sit in his place. There is his widow; she will want venison to feed her and her children, for her sons are yet like the young of the robin before they quit the nest. By your hand has this great calamity befallen her. She has two duties; one to le Loup Cervier, and one to his children. Scalp for scalp, life for life, blood for blood, is one law; to feed her young, another. We know you, Killer of the Deer. You are honest; when you say a thing, it is so. You have but one tongue, and that is not forked, like a snake's. Your head is never hid in the grass; all can see it. What you say, that will you do. You are just. When you have done wrong, it is your wish to do right again, as soon as you can. Here is the Sumach; she is alone in her wigwam, with children crying around her for food; yonder is a rifle; it is loaded and ready to be fired. Take the gun; go forth and shoot a deer; bring the venison and lay it before the widow of le Loup Cervier; feed her children; call yourself her husband. After which, your heart will no longer be Delaware, but Huron; le Sumach's ears will not hear the cries of her children; my people will count the proper number of warriors."

"I feared this, Rivenoak," answered Deerslayer, when the other had ceased speaking; "yes, I did dread that it would come to this. Hows'ever, the truth is soon told, and that will put an end to all expectations on this head. Mingo, I'm white, and Christian-born; 'twould ill become me to take a wife, under red-skin forms, from among heathen. That 30 which I wouldn't do in peaceable times, and under a bright sun, still less would I do behind clouds, in order to save my life. I may never marry; most likely Providence, in putting me up here in the woods, has intended I should live single, and without a lodge of my own; but should such a thing come to pass, none but a woman of my own color and gifts shall darken the door of my wigwam. As for feeding the young of your dead warrior, I would do that cheerfully, could it be done without discredit; but it cannot, seeing that I can never live in a Huron village. Your own young men must find the Sumach in venison, and the next time she marries, let her take a husband whose legs are not long enough to overrun territory that don't belong to him. We fou't a fair battle, and he fell; in this there is nothin' but what a brave expects, and should be ready to meet. As for getting a Mingo heart, as well might you expect to see grey hairs on a boy, or the blackberry growing on

the pine. No, no, Huron; my gifts are white, so far as wives are concerned; it is Delaware in all things touchin' Indians."

These words were scarcely out of the mouth of Deerslayer, before a common murmur betrayed the dissatisfaction with which they had been heard. The aged women, in particular, were loud in their expressions of disgust; and the gentle Sumach herself, a woman quite old enough to be our hero's mother, was not the least pacific in her denunciations. But all the other manifestations of disappointment and discontent were thrown into the background by the fierce resentment of the Panther. This grim chief had thought it a degradation to permit his sister to become the wife of a pale-face of the Yengeese at all, and had only given a reluctant consent to the arrangement—one by no means unusual among the Indians, however—at the earnest solicitations of the bereaved widow; and it goaded him to the quick to find his condescension slighted, the honor he had with so much regret been persuaded to accord, contemned. The animal from which he got his name does not glare on his intended prey with more frightful ferocity than his eyes gleamed on the captive; nor was his arm backward in seconding the fierce resentment that almost consumed his breast.

"Dog of the pale-faces!" he exclaimed, in Iroquois, "go yell among the curs of your own evil hunting-grounds!"

The denunciation was accompanied by an appropriate action. Even while speaking, his arm was lifted, and the tomahawk hurled. Luckily the loud tones of the speaker had drawn the eye of Deerslayer towards him, else would that moment have probably closed his career. So great was the dexterity with which this dangerous weapon was thrown, and so deadly the intent, that it would have riven the skull of the prisoner, had he not stretched forth an arm, and caught the handle in one of its turns, with a readiness quite as remarkable as the skill with which the missile had been hurled. The projectile force was so great, notwithstanding, that when Deerslayer's arm was arrested, his hand was raised above and behind his own head, and in the very attitude necessary to return the attack. It is not certain whether the circumstance of finding himself unexpectedly in this menacing posture and armed, tempted the young man to retaliate, or whether sudden resentment overcame his forbearance and prudence. His eye kindled, however,



and a small red spot appeared on each cheek, while he cast all his energy in the effort of his arm, and threw back the weapon at his assailant. The unexpectedness of this blow contributed to its success, the Panther neither raising an arm nor bending his head to avoid it. The keen little axe struck the victim in a perpendicular line with the nose, directly between the eyes, literally braining him on the spot. Sallying forward, as the serpent darts at his enemy even while receiving its own death-wound, this man of powerful frame fell his length into the open area formed by the circle, quivering in death. A common rush to his relief left the captive, for a single instant, quite without the crowd; and, willing to make one desperate effort for life he bounded off with the activity of a deer. There was but a breathless instant, when the whole band, old and young, women and children, abandoning the lifeless body of the Panther where it lay, raised the yell of alarm, and followed in pursuit.

Sudden as had been the event which induced Deerslayer to make this desperate trial of speed, his mind was not wholly unprepared for the fearful emergency. In the course of the past hour, he had pondered well on the chances of such an experiment, and had shrewdly calculated all the details of success and failure. At the first leap, therefore, his body was completely under the direction of an intelligence that turned all its efforts to the best account, and prevented everything like hesitation or indecision, at the important instant of the start. To this alone was he indebted for the first great advantage, that of getting through the line of sentinels unharmed. The manner in which this was done, though sufficiently simple, merits a description.

Although the shores of the point were not fringed with bushes, as was the case with most of the others on the lake, it was owing altogether to the circumstance that the spot had been so much used by hunters and fishermen. This fringe commenced on what might be termed the main land, and was as dense as usual, extending in long lines both north and south. In the latter direction, then, Deerslayer held his way; and, as the sentinels were a little without the commencement of this thicket, before the alarm was clearly communicated to them the fugitive had gained its cover. To run among the bushes, however, was out of the question, and Deerslayer held his way for some forty or fifty yards in the water, which was barely knee deep, offering as great an obstacle to the

speed of his pursuers as it did to his own. As soon as a favorable spot presented, he darted through the line of bushes, and issued into the open woods.

Several rifles were discharged at Deerslayer while in the water, and more followed as he came out into the comparative exposure of the clear forest. But the direction of his line of flight, which partially crossed that of the fire, the haste with which the weapons had been aimed, and the general confusion that prevailed in the camp, prevented any harm from being done. Bullets whistled past him, and many cut twigs from the branches at his side, but not one touched even his dress. The delay caused by these fruitless attempts was of great service to the fugitive, who had gained more than a hundred yards on even the leading men of the Hurons, ere something like concert and order had entered into the chase. To think of following with rifle in hand was out of the question; and after emptying their pieces in vague hopes of wounding their captive, the best runners of the Indians threw them aside, calling out to the women and boys to recover and load them again as soon as possible.

Deerslayer knew too well the desperate nature of the struggle in which he was engaged, to lose one of the precious moments. He also knew that his only hope was to run in a straight line, for as soon as he began to turn, or double, the greater number of his pursuers would put escape out of the question. He held his way, therefore, in a diagonal direction up the acclivity, which was neither very high nor very steep in this part of the mountain, but which was sufficiently toilsome for one contending for life, to render it painfully oppressive. There, however, he slackened his speed to recover breath, proceeding even at a quick walk or a slow trot, along the more difficult parts of the way. The Hurons were whooping and leaping behind him; but this he disregarded, well knowing they must overcome the difficulties he had surmounted ere they could reach the elevation to which he had attained. The summit of the first hill was now quite near him, and he saw, by the formation of the land, that a deep glen intervened, before the base of a second hill could be reached. Walking deliberately to the summit, he glanced eagerly about him in every direction, in quest of a cover. None offered in the ground; but a fallen tree lay near him, and desperate circumstances require desperate remedies. This tree lay in a line parallel to the glen, at

the brow of the hill; to leap on it, and then to force his person as close as possible under its lower side, took but a moment. Previously to disappearing from his pursuers, however, Deerslayer stood on the height and gave a cry of triumph, as if exulting at the sight of the descent that lay before him.—In the next instant he was stretched beneath the tree.

No sooner was this expedient adopted, than the young man ascertained how desperate had been his own efforts, by the violence of the pulsations in his frame. He could hear his heart beat, and his breathing was like the action of a bellows in quick motion. Breath was gained, however, and the heart soon ceased to throb as if about to break through its confinement. The footsteps of those who toiled up the opposite side of the acclivity were now audible, and presently voices and treads announced the arrival of the pursuers. The foremost shouted as they reached the height; then, fearful that their enemy would escape under favor of the descent, each leaped upon the fallen tree, and plunged into the ravine, trusting to get a sight of the pursued ere he reached the bottom. In this manner, Huron followed Huron, until Natty began to hope the whole had passed. Others succeeded, however, until quite forty had leaped over the tree; and then he counted them, as the surest mode of ascertaining how many could be behind. Presently all were in the bottom of the glen, quite a hundred feet below him, and some had even ascended part of the opposite hill, when it became evident an inquiry was making as to the direction he had taken. This was the critical moment; and one of nerves less steady, or of a training that had been neglected, would have seized it to rise, and fly. Not so with Deerslayer. He still lay quiet, watching with jealous vigilance every movement below, and fast regaining his breath.

The Hurons now resembled a pack of hounds at fault. Little was said, but each man ran about, examining the dead leaves, as the hound hunts for the lost scent. The great number of moccasins that had passed made the examination difficult, though the in-toe of an Indian was easily to be distinguished from the freer and wider step of a white man. Believing that no more pursuers remained behind, and hoping to steal away unseen, Deerslayer suddenly threw himself over the tree, and fell on the upper side. This achievement appeared to be effected successfully, and hope beat high in the bosom of the

fugitive. Rising to his hands and feet, after a moment lost in listening to the sounds in the glen, in order to ascertain if he had been seen, the young man next scrambled to the top of the hill, a distance of only ten yards, in the expectation of getting its brow between him and his pursuers, and himself so far under cover. Even this was effected, and he rose to his feet, walking swiftly but steadily along the summit, in a direction opposite to that in which he had first fled. The nature of the calls in the glen, however, soon made him uneasy, and he sprang upon the summit again, in order to reconnoiter. No sooner did he reach the height than he was seen, and the chase renewed. As it was better footing on the level ground, Deerslayer now avoided the side-hill, holding his flight along the ridge; while the Hurons, judging from the general formation of the land, saw that the ridge would soon melt into the hollow, and kept to the latter, as the easiest mode of heading the fugitive. A few, at the same time, turned south, with a view to prevent his escaping in that direction; while some crossed his trail towards the water, in order to prevent his retreat by the lake, running southerly.

The situation of Deerslayer was now more critical than it ever had been. He was virtually surrounded on three sides, having the lake on the fourth. But he had pondered well on all the chances, and took his measures with coolness, even while at the top of his speed. As is generally the case with the vigorous border-men, he could outrun any single Indian among his pursuers, who were principally formidable to him on account of their numbers and the advantages they possessed in position; and he would not have hesitated to break off in a straight line, at any spot, could he have got the whole band again fairly behind him. But no such chance did, or indeed could now offer; and when he found that he was descending towards the glen, by the melting away of the ridge, he turned short, at right angles to his previous course, and went down the declivity with tremendous velocity, holding his way towards the shore. Some of his pursuers came panting up the hill, in direct chase, while most still kept on, in the ravine, intending to head him at its termination. Deerslayer had now a different, though a desperate project in view. Abandoning all thoughts of escape by the woods, he made the best of his way towards the canoe. He knew where it lay; could it be reached, he had only to run the gauntlet of a few rifles, and success would be certain. None of the war-

rriors had kept their weapons, which would have retarded their speed, and the risk would come either from the uncertain hands of the women, or from those of some well-grown boy; though, most of the latter were already out in hot pursuit. Everything seemed propitious to the execution of this plan, and the course being a continued descent, the young man went over the ground at a rate that promised a speedy termination to his toil.

As Deerslayer approached the point, several women and children were passed, but, though the former endeavored to cast dried branches between his legs, the terror inspired by his bold retaliation on the redoubted Panther, was so great, that none dared come near enough seriously to molest him. He went by all triumphantly, and reached the fringe of bushes. Plunging through these, our hero found himself once more in the lake, and within fifty feet of the canoe. Here he ceased to run, for he well understood that his breath was now all-important to him. He even stooped, as he advanced, and cooled his parched mouth, by scooping up water in his hand to drink. Still the moments pressed, and he soon stood at the side of the canoe. The first glance told him that the paddles had been removed! This was a sore disappointment after all his efforts, and, for a single moment, he thought of turning, and of facing his foes by walking with dignity into the center of the camp again. But an infernal yell, such as the American savage alone can raise, proclaimed the quick approach of the nearest of his pursuers, and the instinct of life triumphed. Preparing himself duly, and giving a right direction to its bows, he ran off into the water bearing the canoe before him, threw all his strength and skill into a last effort, and cast himself forward so as to fall into the bottom of the light craft, without materially impeding its way. Here he remained on his back, both to regain his breath and to cover his person from the deadly rifle. The lightness, which was such an advantage in paddling the canoes, now operated unfavorably. The material was so like a feather, that the boat had no momentum; else would the impulse in that smooth and placid sheet have impelled it to a distance from the shore that would have rendered paddling with the hands safe. Could such a point once be reached. Deerslayer thought he might get far enough out to attract the attention of Chingachgook and Judith, who would not fail to come to his relief with other canoes, a circumstance

that promised everything. As the young man lay in the bottom of the canoe, he watched its movements, by studying the tops of the trees on the mountain-side, and judged of his distance by the time and the motion. Voices on the shore were now numerous, and he heard something said about manning the raft, which, fortunately for the fugitive, lay at a considerable distance, on the other side of the point.

Perhaps the situation of Deerslayer had not been more critical that day, than it was at this moment. It certainly had not been one half as tantalizing. He lay perfectly quiet for two or three minutes, trusting to the single sense of hearing, confident that the noise in the lake would reach his ears, did any one venture to approach by swimming. Once or twice he fancied that the element was stirred by the cautious movement of an arm, and then he perceived it was the wash of the water on the pebbles of the strand; for, in mimicry of the ocean, it is seldom that those little lakes are so totally tranquil as not to possess a slight heaving and setting on their shores. Suddenly all the voices ceased, and a death-like stillness pervaded the spot; a quietness as profound as if all lay in the repose of inanimate life. By this time, the canoe had drifted so far as to render nothing visible to Deerslayer, as he lay on his back, except the blue void of space, and a few of those brighter rays that proceed from the effulgence of the sun, marking his proximity. It was not possible to endure this uncertainty long. The young man well knew that the profound stillness foreboded evil, the savages never being so silent as when about to strike a blow; resembling the stealthy foot of the panther ere he takes his leap. He took out a knife, and was about to cut a hole through the bark, in order to get a view of the shore, when he paused from a dread of being seen in the operation, which would direct the enemy where to aim their bullets. At this instant a rifle was fired, and the ball pierced both sides of the canoe, within eighteen inches of the spot where his head lay. This was close work, but our hero had too lately gone through that which was closer, to be appalled. He lay still half a minute longer, and then he saw the summit of an oak coming slowly within his narrow horizon.

Unable to account for this change, Deerslayer could restrain his impatience no longer. Hitching his body along with the utmost caution, he got his eye at the bullet hole, and fortunately commanded a very tolerable view of the point. The canoe, by one of

those imperceptible impulses that so often decide the fate of men as well as the course of things, had inclined southerly, and was slowly drifting down the lake. It was lucky that Deerslayer had given it a shove sufficiently vigorous to send it past the end of the point ere it took this inclination, or it must have gone ashore again. As it was, it drifted so near it as to bring the tops of two or three trees within the range of the young man's view, as has been mentioned, and, indeed, to come in quite as close proximity with the extremity of the point as was at all safe. The distance could not much have exceeded a hundred feet, though fortunately a light current of air from the southwest began to set it slowly off shore.

Deerslayer now felt the urgent necessity of resorting to some expedient to get farther from his foes, and, if possible, to apprise his friends of his situation. The distance rendered the last difficult, while the proximity to the point rendered the first indispensable. As was usual in such craft, a large, round, smooth stone was in each end of the canoe, for the double purposes of seats and ballast; one of these was within reach of his feet. This stone he contrived to get so far between his legs as to reach it with his hands, and then he managed to roll it to the side of its fellow in the bows, where the two served to keep the trim of the light boat, while he worked his own body as far aft as possible. Before quitting the shore, and as soon as he perceived that the paddles were gone, Deerslayer had thrown a bit of dead branch into the canoe, and this was within reach of his arm. Removing the cap he wore, he put it on the end of this stick, just let it appear over the edge of the canoe, as far as possible from his own person. This ruse was scarcely adopted before the young man had proof how much he had underrated the intelligence of his enemies. In contempt of an artifice so shallow and commonplace, a bullet was fired directly through another part of the canoe, which actually razed his skin. He dropped the cap, and instantly raised it immediately over his head as a safeguard. It would seem that this second artifice was unseen, or what was more probable, the Hurons, feeling certain of recovering their captive, wished to take him alive.

Deerslayer lay passive a few minutes longer, his eye at the bullet hole, however, and much did he rejoice at seeing that he was drifting, gradually, farther and farther from the shore. When he looked upwards, the treetops had disappeared, but he soon

found that the canoe was slowly turning, so as to prevent his getting a view of anything at his peep hole but of the two extremities of the lake. He now bethought him of the stick, which was crooked, and offered some facilities for rowing, without the necessity of rising. The experiment succeeded, on trial, better even than he had hoped, though his great embarrassment was to keep the canoe straight. That his present maneuver was seen soon became apparent by the clamor on the shore, and a bullet entering the stern of the canoe, traversed its length, whistling between the arms of our hero, and passed out at the head. This satisfied the fugitive that he was getting away with tolerable speed, and induced him to increase his efforts. He was making a stronger push than common, when another messenger from the point broke the stick outboard, and at once deprived him of his oar. As the sound of voices seemed to grow more and more distant, however, Deerslayer determined to leave all to the drift, until he believed himself beyond the reach of bullets. This was nervous work, but it was the wisest of all the expedients that offered; and the young man was encouraged to persevere in it, by the circumstance that he felt his face fanned by the air, a proof that there was a little more wind.

## CHAPTER XXVIII

*Nor widows' tears, nor tender orphans' cries  
Can stop th' invader's force;  
Nor swelling seas, nor threatening skies,  
Prevent the pirate's course:  
Their lives to selfish ends decreed,  
Through blood and rapine they proceed;  
No anxious thoughts of ill-repute,  
Suspend the impetuous and unjust pursuit;  
But power and wealth obtained, guilty and great,  
Their fellow-creatures' fears they raise, or urge  
their hate.*

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By this time, Deerslayer had been twenty minutes in the canoe, and he began to grow a little impatient for some signs of relief from his friends. The position of the boat still prevented his seeing in any direction, unless it were up or down the lake; and, though he knew that his line of sight must pass within a hundred yards of the castle, it, in fact, passed that distance to the westward of the buildings. The profound stillness troubled him also, for he knew not whether to ascribe it to the increasing space between him and

the Indians, or to some new artifice. At length, wearied with fruitless watchfulness, the young man turned himself on his back, closed his eyes, and awaited the result in determined acquiescence. If the savages could so completely control their thirst for revenge, he was resolved to be as calm as themselves and to trust his fate to the interposition of the currents and air.

Some additional ten minutes may have passed in this quiescent manner, on both sides, when Deerslayer thought he heard a slight noise, like a low rubbing against the bottom of his canoe. He opened his eyes of course, in expectation of seeing the face or arm of an Indian rising from the water, and found that a canopy of leaves was impending directly over his head. Starting to his feet, the first object that met his eyes was Rivenoak, who had so far aided the slow progress of the boat as to draw it on the point, the grating on the strand being the sound that had first given our hero the alarm. The change in the drift of the canoe had been altogether owing to the baffling nature of the light currents of air, aided by some eddies in the water.

"Come," said the Huron, with a quiet gesture of authority to order his prisoner to land; "my young friend has sailed about till he is tired; he will forget how to run again unless he uses his legs."

"You've the best of it, Huron," returned Deerslayer, stepping steadily from the canoe, and passively following his leader to the open area of the point; "Providence has helped you in an unexpected manner. I'm your prisoner ag'in, and I hope you'll allow that I'm as good at breaking gaol as I am at keeping furloughs."

"My young friend is a moose!" exclaimed the Huron. "His legs are very long; they have given my young men trouble. But he is not a fish; he cannot find his way in the lake. We did not shoot him; fish are taken in nets, and not killed by bullets. When he turns moose again, he will be treated like a moose."

"Ay, have your talk, Rivenoak; make the most of your advantage. 'Tis your right, I suppose, and I know it is your gift. On that point there'll be no words between us; for all men must and ought to follow their gifts. Hows'ever, when your women begin to taunt and abuse me, as I suppose will soon happen, let 'em remember that if a pale-face struggles for life so long as it's lawful and manful, he knows how to

loosen his hold on it, decently, when he feels that the time has come. I'm your captive; work your will on me."

"My brother has had a long run on the hills, and a pleasant sail on the water," returned Rivenoak more mildly, smiling at the same time, in a way that his listener knew denoted pacific intentions. "He has seen the woods, he has seen the water; which does he like best? Perhaps he has seen enough to change his mind, and make him hear reason."

"Speak out, Huron. Something is in your thoughts, and the sooner it is said, the sooner you'll get my answer."

"That is straight! There is no turning in the talk of my pale-face friend, though he is a fox in running. I will speak to him; his ears are now open wider than before, and his eyes are not shut. The Sumach is poorer than ever. Once she had a brother and a husband. She had children too. The time came, and the husband started for the happy hunting-grounds without saying farewell; he left her alone with his children. This he could not help, or he would not have done it; le Loup Cervier was a good husband. It was pleasant to see the venison, and wild ducks, and geese, and bear's meat, that hung in his lodge in winter. It is now gone; it will not keep in warm weather. Who shall bring it back again? Some thought the brother would not forget his sister, and that, next winter, he would see that the lodge should not be empty. We thought this; but the Panther yelled, and followed the husband on the path of death. They are now trying which shall first reach the happy hunting-grounds. Some think the Lynx can run fastest, and some think the Panther can jump the farthest. The Sumach thinks both will travel so fast and so far that neither will ever come back. Who shall feed her and her young? The man who told her husband and her brother to quit her lodge, that there might be room for him to come into it. He is a great hunter, and we know that the woman will never want."

"Ay, Huron, this is soon settled, according to your notions; but it goes sorely against the grain of a white man's feelings. I've heard of men's saving their lives this-away, and I've known'd them that would prefer death to such a sort of captivity. For my part, I do not seek my end; nor do I seek matrimony."

"The pale-face will think of this while my people get ready for the council. He will be told what will

happen. Let him remember how hard it is to lose a husband and a brother. Go; when we want him, the name of Deerslayer will be called."

This conversation had been held with no one near but the speakers. Of all the band that had so lately thronged the place, Rivenoak alone was visible. The rest seemed to have totally abandoned the spot. Even the furniture, clothes, arms, and other property of the camp had entirely disappeared, and the place bore no other proofs of the crowd that had so lately occupied it than the traces of their fires and resting-places, and the trodden earth that still showed the marks of their feet. So sudden and unexpected a change caused Deerslayer a good deal of surprise and some uneasiness, for he had never known it to occur in the course of his experience among the Delawares. He suspected, however, and rightly, that a change of encampment was intended, and that the mystery of the movement was resorted to in order to work on his apprehensions.

Rivenoak walked up the vista of trees, as soon as he ceased speaking, leaving Deerslayer by himself. The chief disappeared behind the covers of the forest, and one unpracticed in such scenes might have believed the prisoner left to the dictates of his own judgment. But the young man, while he felt a little amazement at the dramatic aspect of things, knew his enemies too well to fancy himself at liberty, or a free agent. Still he was ignorant how far the Hurons meant to carry their artifices, and he determined to bring the question, as soon as practicable, to the proof. Affecting an indifference he was far from feeling, he strolled about the area, gradually getting nearer and nearer to the spot where he had landed, when he suddenly quickened his pace, though carefully avoiding all appearance of flight, and, pushing aside the bushes, he stepped upon the beach. The canoe was gone, nor could he see any traces of it, after walking to the northern and southern verges of the point, and examining the shores in both directions. It was evidently removed beyond his reach and knowledge, and under circumstances to show that such had been the intention of the savages.

Deerslayer now better understood his actual situation. He was a prisoner on the narrow tongue of land, vigilantly watched beyond a question, and with no other means of escape than that of swimming. He again thought of this last expedient, but the certainty that the canoe would be sent in chase, and the des-

perate nature of the chances of success, deterred him from the undertaking. While on the strand, he came to a spot where the bushes had been cut and thrown into a small pile. Removing a few of the upper branches, he found beneath them the dead body of the Panther. He knew that it was kept until the savages might find a place to inter it, when it would be beyond the reach of the scalping-knife. He gazed wistfully towards the castle, but there all seemed to be silent and desolate; and a feeling of loneliness and desertion came over him to increase the gloom of the moment.

"God's will be done!" murmured the young man, as he walked sorrowfully away from the beach, entering again beneath the arches of the wood; "God's will be done, on 'arth as it is in heaven! I did hope that my days would not be numbered so soon! but it matters little, after all. A few more winters, and a few more summers, and 'twould have been over, 20 accordin' to natur'. Ah's me! the young and active seldom think death possible, till he grins in their faces and tells 'em the hour is come!"

While this soliloquy was being pronounced, the hunter advanced into the area, where to his surprise he saw Hetty alone, evidently awaiting his return. The girl carried the Bible under her arm and her face, over which a shadow of gentle melancholy was usually thrown, now seemed sad and downcast. Moving nearer, Deerslayer spoke.

"Poor Hetty," he said, "times have been so troublesome of late, that I'd altogether forgotten you; we meet, as it might be, to mourn over what is to happen. I wonder what has become of Chingachgook and Wah!"

"Why did you kill the Huron, Deerslayer," returned the girl reproachfully. "Don't you know your commandments, which say, 'Thou shalt not kill!' They tell me you have now slain the woman's husband and brother."

"It's true, my good Hetty,—'tis gospel truth, and I'll not deny what has come to pass. But you must remember, gal, that many things are lawful in war, which would be onlawful in peace. The husband was shot in open fight; or open so far as I was concerned, while he had a better cover than common; and the brother brought his end on himself, by casting his tomahawk at an unarmed prisoner. Did you witness that deed, gal?"

"I saw it, and was sorry it happened, Deerslayer;

for I hoped you wouldn't have returned blow for blow, but good for evil."

"Ah, Hetty, that may do among the missionaries, but 'twould make an onsartain life in the woods. The Panther craved my blood, and he was foolish enough to throw arms into my hands at the very moment he was striving after it. 'Twould have been ag'in natur' not to raise a hand in such a trial, and 'twould have done discredit to my training and gifts. No, no; I'm as willing to give every man his own, as another; and so I hope you testify to them that will be likely to question you as to what you've seen this day."

"Deerslayer, do you mean to marry Sumach, now she has neither husband nor brother to feed her?"

"Are such your idces of matrimony, Hetty? Ought the young to wive with the old—the pale-face with the red-skin—the Christian with the heathen? It's ag'in reason and natur', and so you'll see, if you'll think of it a moment."

"I've always heard mother say," returned Hetty, averting her face, more from a feminine instinct than from any consciousness of wrong, "that people should never marry until they loved each other better than brothers and sisters; and I suppose that is what you mean. Sumach is old, and you *are* young."

"Ay, and she's red, and I'm white. Besides, Hetty, suppose you was a wife, now, having married some young man of your own years, and state, and color—Hurry Harry, for instance,"—Deerslayer selected this example, simply from the circumstance that he was the only young man known to both,—“and that he had fallen on a warpath, would you wish to take to your bosom, for a husband, the man that slew him?"

"Oh! no, no, no," returned the girl, shuddering. "That would be wicked, as well as heartless! No Christian girl could, or would, do that. I never shall be the wife of Hurry, I know; but were he my husband, no man should ever be it again, after his death."

"I thought it would get to this, Hetty, when you come to understand sarcumstances. 'Tis a moral impossibility that I should ever marry Sumach; and, though Indian weddin's have no priests, and not much religion, a white man who knows his gifts and duties can't profit by that, and so make his escape at the fitting time. I do think death would be more nat'ral like, and welcome, than wedlock with this woman."

"Don't say it too loud," interrupted Hetty impa-

tiently; "I suppose she will not like to hear it. I'm surc Hurry would rather marry even me than suffer torments, though I *am* feeble-minded; and I am surc it would kill me to think he'd prefer death to being my husband."

"Ay, gal; you an't Sumach, but a comcly young Christian, with a good heart, pleasant smile, and kind eye. Hurry might be proud to get you, and that, too, not in misery and sorrow, but in his best and happiest days. Hows'ever, take my advice, and never talk to Hurry about these things; he's only a borderer, at the best."

"I wouldn't tell him, for the world!" exclaimed the girl, looking about her like one affrighted, and blushing, she knew not why. "Mother always said young women shouldn't be forward, and speak their minds before they're asked;—oh! I never forget what mother told me. 'Tis a pity Hurry is so handsome, Deerslayer; I do think fewer girls would like him then, and he would sooner know his own mind."

"Poor gal, poor gal, it's plain enough how it is; but the Lord will bear in mind one of your simple heart and kind feelin's! We'll talk no more of these things; if you had reason, you'd be sorrowful at having let others so much into your secret. Tell me, Hetty, what has become of all the Hurons, and why they let you roam about the p'int, as if you, too, was a prisoner?"

"I'm no prisoner, Deerslayer, but a free girl, and go when and where I please. Nobody dare hurt *me*! If they did, God would be angry—as I can show them in the Bible. No—no—Hetty Hutter is not afraid; *she's* in good hands. The Hurons are up yonder in the woods, and keep a good watch on us both. I'll answer for it, since all the women and children are on the lookout. Some are burying the body of the poor girl who was shot last night, so that the enemy and the wild beasts can't find it. I told 'em that father and mother lay in the lake, but I wouldn't let them know in what part of it, for Judith and I don't want any of their heathenish company in our burying-ground."

"Ah's me!—Well, it is an awful dispatch to be standing here, alive and angry, and with the feelin's up and furious one hour, and then to be carried away at the next, and put out of sight of mankind in a hole in the 'arth! No one knows what will happen to him on a warpath, that's sartain."

Here the stirring of leaves and the cracking of



dried twigs interrupted the discourse, and apprised Deerslayer of the approach of his enemies. The Hurons closed around the spot that had been prepared for the coming scene, and in the center of which the intended victim now stood, in a circle—the armed men being so distributed among the feeble members of the band, that there was no safe opening through which the prisoner could break. But the latter no longer contemplated flight; the recent trial having satisfied him of his inability to escape when 10 pursued so closely by numbers. On the contrary, all his energies were aroused, in order to meet his expected fate, with a calmness that should do credit to his color and his manhood; one equally removed from recreant alarm and savage boasting.

When Rivenoak reappeared in the circle, he occupied his old place at the head of the area. Several of the elder warriors stood near him; but, now that the brother of Sumach had fallen, there was no longer any recognized chief present, whose influence and 20 authority offered a dangerous rivalry to his own. Nevertheless, it is well known that little which could be called monarchical, or despotic, entered into the politics of the North American tribes, although the first colonists, bringing with them to this hemisphere the notions and opinions of their own countries, often dignified the chief men of those primitive nations with the titles of kings and princes. Hereditary influence did certainly exist; but there is much reason to believe it existed rather as a consequence of 30 hereditary merit and acquired qualifications, than as a birthright. Rivenoak, however, had not even this claim—having risen to consideration purely by the force of talents, sagacity, and, as Bacon expresses it, in relation to all distinguished statesmen, “by a union of great and mean qualities”; a truth of which the career of the profound Englishman himself furnishes so apt an illustration.

Next to arms, eloquence offers the great avenue to popular favor, whether it be in civilized or savage 40 life; and Rivenoak had succeeded, as so many have succeeded before him, quite as much by rendering fallacies acceptable to his listeners, as by any profound or learned expositions of truth, or the accuracy of his logic. Nevertheless, he had influence; and was far from being altogether without just claims to its possession. Like most men who reason more than they feel, the Huron was not addicted to the indulgence of the mere ferocious passions of his people: he had

been commonly found on the side of mercy in all the scenes of vindictive torture and revenge that had occurred in his tribe since his own attainment to power. On the present occasion, he was reluctant to proceed to extremities, although the provocation was so great; still it exceeded his ingenuity to see how that alternative could well be avoided. Sumach resented her rejection more than she did the deaths of her husband and brother, and there was little probability that the woman would pardon a man who had so unequivocally preferred death to her embraces. Without her forgiveness there was scarce a hope that the tribe could be induced to overlook its loss; and even to Rivenoak, himself, much as he was disposed to pardon, the fate of our hero now appeared to be almost hopelessly sealed.

When the whole band was arrayed around the captive, a grave silence, so much the more threatening from its profound quiet, pervaded the place. Deerslayer perceived that the women and boys had been preparing splinters of the fat pine roots, which he well knew were to be stuck into his flesh and set in flames, while two or three of the young men held the thongs of bark with which he was to be bound. The smoke of a distant fire announced that the burning brands were in preparation, and several of the elder warriors passed their fingers over the edges of their tomahawks, as if to prove their keenness and temper. Even the knives seemed loosened in their sheaths, impatient for the bloody and merciless work to begin.

“Killer of the Deer,” recommenced Rivenoak, certainly without any signs of sympathy or pity in his manner, though with calmness and dignity; “Killer of the Deer, it is time that my people knew their minds. The sun is no longer over our heads; tired of waiting on the Hurons, he has begun to fall near the pines on this side of the valley. He is travelling fast towards the country of our French fathers; it is to warn his children that their lodges are empty, and that they ought to be at home. The roaming wolf has his den, and he goes to it when he wishes to see his young. The Iroquois are not poorer than the wolves. They have villages, and wigwams, and fields of corn; the good spirits will be tired of watching them alone. My people must go back and see to their own business. There will be joy in the lodges when they hear our whoop from the forest! It will be a sorrowful whoop; when it is understood, grief will come after it. There will be one scalp-whoop, but there will be



only one. We have the fur of the Muskrat; his body is among the fishes. Deerslayer must say whether another scalp shall be on our pole. Two lodges are empty; a scalp, living or dead, is wanted at each door."

"Then take 'em dead, Huron," firmly, but altogether without dramatic boasting, returned the captive. "My hour is come, I do suppose; and what must be, must. If you are bent on the tortur', I'll do my indvors to bear up ag'in it, though no man can say 10 how far his natur' will stand pain, until he's been tried."

"The pale-face cur begins to put his tail between his legs!" cried a young and garrulous savage, who bore the appropriate title of the Corbeau Rouge; a *sobriquet* he had gained from the French, by his facility in making unseasonable noises, and an undue tendency to hear his own voice; "he is no warrior; he has killed the Loup Cervier when looking behind him not to see the flash of his own rifle. He grunts 20 like a hog already; when the Huron women begin to torment him, he will cry like the young of the catamount. He is a Delaware woman, dressed in the skin of a Yengeese!"

"Have your say, young man; have your say," returned Deerslayer, unmoved; "you know no better, and I can overlook it. Talking may aggravate women, but can hardly make knives sharper, fire hotter, or rifles more sartain."

Rivenoak now interfered, reproving the Red Crow 30 for his premature interference, and then directing the proper persons to bind the captive. This expedient was adopted, not from any apprehension that he would escape, or from any necessity, that was yet apparent, of his being unable to endure the torture with his limbs free, but from an ingenious design of making him feel his helplessness, and of gradually sapping his resolution, by undermining it, as it might be, little by little. Deerslayer offered no resistance. He submitted his arms and his legs, freely if not 40 cheerfully, to the ligaments of bark which were bound around them, by order of the chief, in a way to produce as little pain as possible. These directions were secret, and given in a hope that the captive would finally save himself from any serious bodily suffering, by consenting to take the Sumach for a wife. As soon as the body of Deerslayer was withed in bark sufficiently to create a lively sense of helplessness, he was literally carried to a young tree and bound against it,

in a way that effectually prevented him from moving, as well as from falling. The hands were laid flat against the legs, and thongs were passed over all, in a way nearly to incorporate the prisoner with the tree. His cap was then removed, and he was left half-standing, half-sustained by his bonds, to face the coming scene in the best manner he could.

Previously to proceeding to anything like extremities, it was the wish of Rivenoak to put his captive's resolution to the proof by renewing the attempt at a compromise. This could be effected only in one manner, the acquiescence of the Sumach being indispensably necessary to a compromise of her right to be revenged. With this view, then, the woman was next desired to advance, and to look to her own interest; no agent being considered as efficient as the principal herself in this negotiation. The Indian females, when girls, are usually mild and submissive, with musical tones, pleasant voices, and merry laughs; but toil and suffering generally deprive them of most of these advantages by the time they have reached an age which the Sumach had long before passed. To render their voices harsh, it would seem to require active, malignant passions, though, when excited, their screams can rise to a sufficiently conspicuous degree of discordancy to assert their claim to possess this distinctive peculiarity of the sex. The Sumach was not altogether without feminine attraction, however, and had so recently been deemed handsome in her tribe, as not to have yet learned the full influence that time and exposure produce on man as well as on woman. By an arrangement of Rivenoak's, some of the women around her had been employing the time in endeavoring to persuade the bereaved widow that there was still a hope Deerslayer might be prevailed on to enter her wigwam in preference to entering the world of spirits, and this, too, with a success that previous symptoms scarcely justified. All this was the result of a resolution on the part of the chief to leave no proper means unemployed, in order to get the greatest hunter that was then thought to exist in all that region transferred to his own nation, as well as a husband for a woman who he felt would be likely to be troublesome, were any of her claims to the attention and care of the tribe overlooked.

In conformity with this scheme, the Sumach had been secretly advised to advance into the circle, and to make her appeal to the prisoner's sense of justice before the band had recourse to the last experiment.

The woman, nothing loth, consented; for there was some such attraction, in becoming the wife of a noted hunter, among the females of the tribes, as is experienced by the sex in more refined life, when they bestow their hands on the affluent. As the duties of a mother were thought to be paramount to all other considerations, the widow felt none of that embarrassment in preferring her claims, to which even a female fortune-hunter among ourselves might be liable. When she stood forth before the whole party, therefore, the children that she led by the hand fully justified all she did.

"You see me before you, cruel pale-face," the woman commenced; "your spirit must tell you my errand. I have found *you*; I cannot find le Loup Cervier, nor the Panther; I have looked for them, in the lake, in the woods, in the clouds. I cannot say where they have gone."

"No man knows, good Sumach, no man knows," interposed the captive. "When the spirit leaves the body it passes into a world beyond our knowledge, and the wisest way, for them that are left behind, is to hope for the best. No doubt both your warriors have gone to the happy hunting-grounds, and at the proper time you will see 'em ag'in in their improved state. The wife and sister of braves must have looked forward to some such termination of their 'arthly careers."

"Cruel pale-face, what had my warriors done that you should slay them? They were the best hunters and the boldest young men of their tribe; the Great Spirit intended that they should live until they withered like the branches of the hemlock, and fell of their own weight."

"Nay, nay, good Sumach," interrupted the Deerslayer, whose love of truth was too indomitable to listen to such hyperbole with patience, even though it came from the torn breast of a widow,—“Nay, nay, good Sumach, this is a little out-doing red-skin privileges. Young man was neither, any more than you can be called a young woman; and as to the Great Spirit's intending that they should fall otherwise than they did, that's a grievous mistake, inasmuch as what the Great Spirit intends is sartain to come to pass. Then, ag'in, it's plain enough neither of your fri'nds did me any harm; I raised my hand ag'in 'em on account of what they were *striving* to do, rather than what they did. This is nat'ral law, 'to do, lest you should be done by.'"

"It is so. Sumach has but one tongue; she can tell but one story. The pale-face struck the Hurons, lest the Hurons should strike him. The Hurons are a just nation: they will forget it. The chiefs will shut their eyes, and pretend not to have seen it. The young men will believe the Panther and the Lynx have gone to far-off hunts; and the Sumach will take her children by the hand, and go into the lodge of the pale-face, and say, 'See; these are *your* children—they are also mine; feed us, and we will live with you.'"

"The tams are onadmissible, woman; and, though I feel for your losses, which must be hard to bear, the tams cannot be accepted. As to givin' you ven'son, in case we lived near enough together, that would be no great expl'ite; but as for becomin' your husband, and the father of your children, to be honest with you, I feel no callin' that-a-way."

"Look at this boy, cruel pale-face; he has no father to teach him to kill the deer, or to take scalps. See this girl; what young man will come to look for a wife in a lodge that has no head? There are more among my people in the Canadas, and the Killer of Deer will find as many mouths to feed as his heart can wish for."

"I tell you, woman," exclaimed Deerslayer, whose imagination was far from seconding the appeal of the widow, and who began to grow restive under the vivid pictures she was drawing, "all this is nothing to me. People and kindred must take care of their own fatherless, leaving them that have no children to their own loneliness. As for me, I have no offspring, and I want no wife. Now, go away, Sumach; leave me in the hands of your chiefs; for my color, and gifts, and natur' itself, cry out ag'in the idee of taking you for a wife."

It is unnecessary to expatiate on the effect of this downright refusal of the woman's proposals. If there was anything like tenderness in her bosom,—and no woman was, probably, ever entirely without that feminine quality,—it all disappeared at this plain announcement. Fury, rage, mortified pride, and a volcano of wrath, burst out at one explosion, converting her into a sort of maniac, as it might be at the touch of a magician's wand. Without deigning a reply in words, she made the arches of the forest ring with her screams, and then flew forward at her victim, seizing him by the hair, which she appeared resolute to draw out by the roots. It was some time before her grasp could be loosened. Fortunately for the prisoner,

her rage was blind, since his total helplessness left him entirely at her mercy; had it been better directed it might have proved fatal before any relief could have been offered. As it was, she did succeed in wrenching out two or three handfuls of hair, before the young men could tear her away from her victim.

The insult that had been offered to the Sumach was deemed an insult to the whole tribe; not so much, however, on account of any respect that was felt for the woman, as on account of the honor of 10 the Huron nation. Sumach, herself, was generally considered to be as acid as the berry from which she derived her name; and now that her great supporters, her husband and brother, were both gone, few cared about concealing their aversion. Nevertheless, it had become a point of honor to punish the pale-face who disdained a Huron woman, and more particularly, one who coolly preferred death to relieving the tribe from the support of a widow and her children. The young men showed an impatience to begin to torture, 20 that Rivenoak understood; and as his elder associates manifested no disposition to permit any longer delay, he was compelled to give the signal for the infernal work to proceed.

#### CHAPTER XXIX

*The ugly bear now minded not the stake,  
Nor how the cruel mastiffs do him tear;  
The stag lay still, unroused from the brake,  
The foamy boar feared not the hunter's spear:  
All thing was still in desert, bush, and briar.*

LORD DORSET

It was one of the common expedients of the savages, on such occasions, to put the nerves of their victims to the severest proofs. On the other hand, it was a matter of Indian pride, to betray no yielding to terror, or pain; but for the prisoner to provoke his enemies to such acts of violence as would soonest produce death. Many a warrior had been known to bring his own sufferings to a more speedy termina- 40 tion by taunting reproaches and reviling language, when he found that his physical system was giving way under the agony of sufferings, produced by a hellish ingenuity, that might well eclipse all that has been said of the infernal devices of religious persecution. This happy expedient of taking refuge from the ferocity of his foes, in their passions, was denied Deerslayer, however, by his peculiar notions of the duty of a white man; and he had stoutly made up his

mind to endure everything, in preference to disgracing his color.

No sooner did the young men understand that they were at liberty to commence, than some of the boldest and most forward among them sprang into the arena, tomahawk in hand. Here they prepared to throw that dangerous weapon, the object being to strike the tree as near as possible to the victim's head, without absolutely hitting him. This was so hazardous an experiment, that none but those who were known to be exceedingly expert with the weapon were allowed to enter the lists at all, lest an early death might interfere with the expected entertainment. In the truest hands, it was seldom that the captive escaped injury in these trials; and it often happened that death followed, even when the blow was not premeditated. In the particular case of our hero, Rivenoak and the older warriors were apprehensive that the example of the Panther's fate might prove a motive with some fiery spirit, suddenly to sacrifice his conqueror, when the temptation of effecting it in precisely the same manner, and possibly with the identical weapon with which the warrior had fallen, offered. This circumstance, of itself, rendered the ordeal of the tomahawk doubly critical for the Deerslayer.

It would seem, however, that all who now entered what we shall call the lists, were more disposed to exhibit their own dexterity than to resent the deaths 30 of their comrades. Each prepared himself for the trial, with the feelings of rivalry, rather than with the desire for vengeance; and for the first few minutes, the prisoner had little more connection with the result, than grew out of the interest that necessarily attached itself to a living target. The young men were eager, instead of being fierce, and Rivenoak thought he still saw signs of being able to save the life of the captive, when the vanity of the young men had been gratified: always admitting that it was not sacrificed to the delicate experiments that were about to be made.

The first youth who presented himself for the trial was called the Raven, having as yet had no opportunity of obtaining a more warlike *sobriquet*. He was remarkable for high pretension, rather than for skill, or exploits; and those who knew his character thought the captive in imminent danger when he took his stand, and poised the tomahawk. Nevertheless, the young man was good-natured, and no thought was

uppermost in his mind other than the desire to make a better cast than any of his fellows. Deerslayer got an inkling of this warrior's want of reputation, by the injunctions that he had received from the seniors; who, indeed, would have objected to his appearing in the arena at all, but for an influence derived from his father, an aged warrior of great merit, who was then in the lodges of the tribe. Still, our hero maintained an appearance of self-possession. He had made up his mind that his hour was come, and it would have been a mercy, instead of a calamity, to fall by the unsteadiness of the first hand that was raised against him. After a suitable number of flourishes and gesticulations, that promised much more than he could perform, the Raven let the tomahawk quit his hand. The weapon whirled through the air with the usual evolutions, cut a chip from the sapling to which the prisoner was bound, within a few inches of his cheek, and stuck in a large oak that grew several yards behind him. This was decidedly a bad effort, and a common sneer proclaimed as much, to the great mortification of the young man. On the other hand, there was a general, but suppressed murmur of admiration, at the steadiness with which the captive stood the trial. The head was the only part he could move, and this had been purposely left free, that the tormentors might have the amusement, and the tormented endure the shame of dodging, and otherwise attempting to avoid the blows. Deerslayer disappointed these hopes, by a command of nerve that rendered his whole body as immovable as the tree to which it was bound. Nor did he even adopt the natural and usual expedient of shutting his eyes: the firmest and oldest warrior of the red-men never having more disdainfully denied himself this advantage, under similar circumstances.

The Raven had no sooner made his unsuccessful and puerile effort, than he was succeeded by *le Daim-Mosc*, or the Moose; a middle-aged warrior, who was particularly skilful in the use of the tomahawk, and from whose attempt the spectators confidently looked for gratification. This man had none of the good-nature of the Raven, but he would gladly have sacrificed the captive to his hatred of the pale-faces generally, were it not for the greater interest he felt in his own success as one particularly skilful in the use of this weapon. He took his stand quietly, but with an air of confidence, poised his little axe but a single instant, advanced a foot with a quick motion, and

threw. Deerslayer saw the keen instrument whirling towards him, and believed all was over; still, he was not touched. The tomahawk had actually bound the head of the captive to the tree, by carrying before it some of his hair; having buried itself deep beneath the soft bark. A general yell expressed the delight of the spectators, and the Moose felt his heart soften a little towards the prisoner, whose steadiness of nerve alone enabled him to give this evidence of his consummate skill.

*Le Daim-Mosc* was succeeded by the Bounding Boy, or *le Garçon qui Bondi*, who came leaping into the circle like a hound, or a goat at play. This was one of those elastic youths, whose muscles seemed always in motion, and who either affected, or who from habit was actually unable to move in any other manner, than by showing the antics just mentioned. Nevertheless, he was both brave and skilful, and had gained the respect of his people by deeds in war as well as success in the hunts. A far nobler name would long since have fallen to his share, had not a Frenchman of rank inadvertently given him this *sobriquet*, which he religiously preserved as coming from his great father, who lived beyond the wide salt lake. The Bounding Boy skipped about in front of the captive, menacing him with his tomahawk, now on one side, and now on another, and then again in front, in the vain hope of being able to extort some sign of fear by this parade of danger. At length Deerslayer's patience became exhausted by all this mummery, and he spoke, for the first time since the trial had actually commenced.

"Throw away, Huron!" he cried, "or your tomahawk will forget its ar'n'd. Why do you keep loping about like a fa'a'n that's showing its dam how well it can skip, when you're a warrior grown, yourself, and a warrior grown defies you and all your silly antics? Throw, or the Huron gals will laugh in your face."

Although not intended to produce such an effect, the last words aroused the "Bounding" warrior to fury. The same nervous excitability which rendered him so active in his person, made it difficult to repress his feelings, and the words were scarcely past the lips of the speaker, than the tomahawk left the hand of the Indian. Nor was it cast without good-will, and a fierce determination to slay. Had the intention been less deadly, the danger might have been greater. The aim was uncertain, and the weapon glanced near the

check of the captive, slightly cutting the shoulder in its evolutions. This was the first instance in which any other object, than that of terrifying the prisoner, and of displaying skill, had been manifested; and the Bounding Boy was immediately led from the arena, and was warmly rebuked for his intemperate haste, which had come so near defeating all the hopes of the band.

To this irritable person succeeded several other young warriors, who not only hurled the tomahawk but who cast the knife, a far more dangerous experiment, with reckless indifference; yet they always manifested a skill that prevented any injury to the captive. Several times Deerslayer was grazed, but in no instance did he receive what might be termed a wound. The unflinching firmness with which he faced his assailants, more especially in the sort of rally with which this trial terminated, excited a profound respect in the spectators; and when the chiefs announced that the prisoner had well withstood the trials of the knife and the tomahawk, there was not a single individual in the band who really felt any hostility towards him, with the exception of Sumach and the Bounding Boy. These two discontented spirits got together, it is true, feeding each other's ire; but, as yet, their malignant feelings were confined very much to themselves, though there existed the danger that the others, ere long, could not fail to be excited by their own efforts into that demoniacal state which usually accompanied all similar scenes among the red-men.

Rivenoak now told his people that the pale-face had proved himself to be a man. He might live with the Delawares, but he had not been made woman with that tribe. He wished to know whether it was the desire of the Hurons to proceed any further. Even the gentlest of the females, however, had received too much satisfaction in the late trials to forego their expectations of a gratifying exhibition; and there was but one voice in the request to proceed. The politic chief, who had some such desire to receive so celebrated a hunter into his tribe as a European minister has to devise a new and available means of taxation, sought every plausible means of arresting the trial in season; for he well knew, if permitted to go far enough to arouse the more ferocious passions of the tormentors, it would be as easy to dam the waters of the great lakes of his own region as to attempt to arrest them in their bloody career. He therefore called four or five of the best marksmen to him, and

bid them put the captive to the proof of the rifle, while, at the same time, he cautioned them touching the necessity of their maintaining their own credit, by the closest attention to the manner of exhibiting their skill.

When Deerslayer saw the chosen warriors step into the circle with their arms prepared for service, he felt some such relief as the miserable sufferer, who has long endured the agonies of disease, feels at the certain approach of death. Any trifling variance in the aim of this formidable weapon would prove fatal; since, the head being the target, or rather the point it was desired to graze without injury, an inch or two of difference in the line of projection, must at once determine the question of life or death.

In the torture by the rifle there was none of the latitude permitted that appeared in the case of even Gesler's apple, a hair's-breadth being, in fact, the utmost limits that an expert marksman would allow himself on an occasion like this. Victims were frequently shot through the head by too eager or unskillful hands; and it often occurred that, exasperated by the fortitude and taunts of the prisoner, death was dealt intentionally in a moment of ungovernable irritation. All this Deerslayer well knew, for it was in relating the traditions of such scenes, as well as of the battles and victories of their people, that the old men beguiled the long winter evenings in their cabins. He now fully expected the end of his career, and experienced a sort of melancholy pleasure in the idea that he was to fall by a weapon as much beloved as the rifle. A slight interruption, however, took place before the business was allowed to proceed.

Hetty Hutter witnessed all that passed, and the scene at first had pressed upon her feeble mind in a way to paralyze it entirely; but, by this time, she had rallied, and was growing indignant at the unmerited suffering the Indians were inflicting on her friend. Though timid, and shy as the young of the deer, on so many occasions, this right-feeling girl was always intrepid in the cause of humanity; the lessons of her mother, and the impulses of her own heart,—perhaps we might say the promptings of that unseen and pure spirit that seemed ever to watch over and direct her actions—uniting to keep down the apprehensions of woman, and to impel her to be bold and resolute. She now appeared in the circle, gentle, feminine, even bashful in mien, as usual, but earnest

in her words and countenance, speaking like one who knew herself to be sustained by the high authority of God.

"Why do you torment Deerslayer, red-men?" she asked. "What has he done that you trifle with his life; who has given you the right to be his judges? Suppose one of your knives or tomahawks had hit him; what Indian among you all could cure the wound you would make? Besides, in harming Deerslayer, you injure your own friend; when father and Hurry Harry came after your scalps, he refused to be of the party, and stayed in the canoe by himself. You are tormenting your friend in tormenting this young man!"

The Hurons listened with grave attention, and one among them, who understood English, translated what had been said into their native tongue. As soon as Rivenoak was made acquainted with the purport of her address, he answered it in his own dialect; the interpreter conveying it to the girl in English.

"My daughter is very welcome to speak," said the stern old orator, using gentle intonations, and smiling as kindly as if addressing a child—"the Hurons are glad to hear her voice; they listen to what she says. The Great Spirit often speaks to men with such tongues. This time her eyes have not been open wide enough to see all that has happened. Deerslayer did not come for our scalps, that is true; why did he not come? Here they are, on our heads; the warlocks are ready to be taken hold of; a bold enemy ought to stretch out his hand to seize them. The Iroquois are too great a nation to punish men that take scalps. What they do themselves, they like to see others do. Let my daughter look around her, and count my warriors. Had I as many hands as four warriors, their fingers would be fewer than my people, when they came into your hunting-grounds. Now, a whole hand is missing. Where are the fingers? Two have been cut off by this pale-face; my Hurons wish to see if he did this by means of a stout heart, or by treachery; like a skulking fox, or like a leaping panther."

"You know yourself, Huron, how one of them fell. I saw it, and you all saw it, too. 'Twas too bloody to look at, but it was not Deerslayer's fault. Your warrior sought his life, and he defended himself. I don't know whether the good book says that it was right, but all men will do that. Come, if you want to know which of you can shoot best, give Deerslayer a rifle, and then you will find how much more ex-

pert he is than any of your warriors; yes, than *all* of them together!"

Could one have looked upon such a scene with indifference, he would have been amused at the gravity with which the savages listened to the translation of this unusual request. No taunt, no smile mingled with their surprise; for Hetty had a character and a manner too saintly to subject her infirmity to the mockings of the rude and ferocious. On the contrary, she was answered with a respectful attention.

"My daughter does not always talk like a chief at a council fire," returned Rivenoak, "or she would not have said this. Two of my warriors have fallen by the blows of our prisoner; their grave is too small to hold a third. The Hurons do not like to crowd their dead. If there is another spirit about to set out for the far-off world, it must not be the spirit of a Huron; it must be the spirit of a pale-face. Go, daughter, and sit by Sumach, who is in grief; let the Huron warriors show how well they can shoot; let the pale-face show how little he cares for their bullets."

Hetty's mind was unequal to a sustained discussion, and, accustomed to defer to the directions of her seniors, she did as told, seating herself passively on a log by the side of the Sumach, and averting her face from the painful scene that was occurring within the circle.

The warriors, as soon as this interruption had ceased, resumed their places, and again prepared to exhibit their skill, as there was a double object in view, that of putting the constancy of the captive to the proof, and that of showing how steady were the hands of the marksmen under circumstances of excitement. The distance was small, and, in one sense, safe. But in diminishing the distance taken by the tormentors, the trial to the nerves of the captive was essentially increased. The face of Deerslayer, indeed, was just removed sufficiently from the ends of the guns to escape the effects of the flash, and his steady eye was enabled to look directly into their muzzles, as it might be, in anticipation of the fatal messenger that was to issue from each. The cunning Hurons well knew this fact; and scarce one levelled his piece without first causing it to point as near as possible at the forehead of the prisoner, in the hope that his fortitude would fail him, and that the band would enjoy the triumph of seeing a victim quail under their ingenious cruelty. Nevertheless, each of the competi-

tors was still careful not to injure, the disgrace of striking prematurely being second only to that of failing altogether in attaining the object. Shot after shot was made; all the bullets coming in close proximity to the Deerslayer's head, without touching it. Still, no one could detect even the twitching of a muscle on the part of the captive, or the slightest winking of an eye. This indomitable resolution, which so much exceeded everything of its kind that any present had before witnessed, might be referred to three distinct causes. The first was resignation to his fate, blended with natural steadiness of deportment; for our hero had calmly made up his mind that he must die, and preferred this mode to any other; the second was his great familiarity with this particular weapon, which deprived it of all the terror that is usually connected with the mere form of the danger; and the third was this familiarity carried out in practice, to a degree so nice as to enable the intended victim to tell, within an inch, the precise spot where each bullet must strike, for he calculated its range by looking in at the bore of the piece. So exact was Deerslayer's estimation of the line of fire, that his pride of feeling finally got the better of his resignation, and, when five or six had discharged their bullets into the trees, he could not refrain from expressing his contempt at their want of hand and eye.

"You may call this shooting, Mingos," he exclaimed, "but we've squaws among the Delawares, and I have known Dutch gals on the Mohawk, that could outdo your greatest indivors. Ondo these arms of mine, put a rifle into my hands, and I'll pin the thinnest warlock in your party to any tree you can show me; and this at a hundred yards: ay, or at two hundred, if the object can be seen, nineteen shots in twenty: or, for that matter, twenty in twenty, if the piece is creditable and trusty!"

A low menacing murmur followed this cool taunt; the ire of the warriors kindled at listening to such a reproach from one who so far disdained their efforts as to refuse even to wink, when a rifle was discharged as near his face as could be done without burning it. Rivenoak perceived that the moment was critical, and, still retaining his hope of adopting so noted a hunter into his tribe, the politic old chief interposed in time, probably, to prevent an immediate resort to that portion of the torture which must necessarily have produced death, through extreme bodily suffering, if in no other manner. Moving into the center of the irri-

tated group, he addressed them with his usually wily logic and plausible manner, at once suppressing the fierce movement that had commenced.

"I see how it is," he said. "We have been like the pale-faces when they fasten their doors at night, out of fear of the red-man. They use so many bars that the fire comes and burns them before they can get out. We have bound the Deerslayer too tight; the thongs keep his limbs from shaking, and his eyes from shutting. Loosen him; let us see what his own body is really made of."

It is often the case, when we are thwarted in a cherished scheme, that any expedient, however unlikely to succeed, is gladly resorted to, in preference to a total abandonment of the project. So it was with the Hurons. The proposal of the chief found instant favor; and several hands were immediately at work, cutting and tearing the ropes of bark from the body of our hero. In half a minute, Deerslayer stood as free from bonds, as when, an hour before, he had commenced his flight on the side of the mountain. Some little time was necessary that he should recover the use of his limbs, the circulation of the blood having been checked by the tightness of the ligatures; and this was accorded to him by the politic Rivenoak, under the pretense that his body would be more likely to submit to apprehension, if its true tone were restored; though really with a view to give time to the fierce passions which had been awakened in the bosoms of his young men, to subside. This *ruse* succeeded; and Deerslayer, by rubbing his limbs, stamping his feet, and moving about, soon regained the circulation;—recovering all his physical powers, as effectually as if nothing had occurred to disturb them.

It is seldom men think of death in the pride of their health and strength. So it was with Deerslayer. Having been helplessly bound, and, as he had every reason to suppose, so lately on the very verge of the other world, to find himself so unexpectedly liberated, in possession of his strength, and with a full command of limb, acted on him like a sudden restoration to life, reanimating hopes that he had once absolutely abandoned. From that instant all his plans changed. In this, he simply obeyed a law of nature; for while we have wished to represent our hero as being resigned to his fate, it has been far from our intention to represent him as anxious to die. From the instant that his buoyancy of feeling revived, his thoughts were keenly bent on the various projects that pre-



sented themselves as modes of evading the designs of his enemies; and he again became the quick-witted, ingenious, and determined woodsman, alive to all his own powers and resources. The change was so great that his mind resumed its elasticity; and, no longer thinking of submission, it dwelt only on the devices of the sort of warfare in which he was engaged.

As soon as Deerslayer was released, the band divided itself in a circle around him, in order to hedge him in; and the desire to break down his spirit grew 10 in them, precisely as they saw proofs of the difficulty there would be in subduing it. The honor of the band was now involved in the issue; and even the sex lost all its sympathy with suffering, in the desire to save the reputation of the tribe. The voices of the girls, soft and melodious as nature had made them, were heard mingling with the menaces of the men; and the wrongs of Sumach suddenly assumed the character of injuries inflicted on every Huron female. Yielding to this rising tumult, the men drew back a little, signify- 20 ing to the females that they left the captive, for a time, in their hands; it being a common practice, on such occasions, for the women to endeavor to throw the victim into a rage by their taunts and revilings, and then to turn him suddenly over to the men in a state of mind that was little favorable to resisting the agony of bodily suffering. Nor was this party without the proper instruments for effecting such a purpose. Sumach had a notoriety as a scold; and one or two crones, like the She Bear, had come out with the 30 party, most probably as the conservators of its decency and moral discipline; such things occurring in savage as well as civilized life. It is unnecessary to repeat all that ferocity and ignorance could invent for such a purpose; the only difference between this outbursting of feminine anger, and a similar scene among ourselves, consisting in the figures of speech and the epithets; the Huron women calling their prisoner by the names of the lower and least respected animals that were known to themselves.

But Deerslayer's mind was too much occupied to permit him to be disturbed by the abuse of excited hags; and their rage necessarily increasing with his indifference, as his indifference increased with their rage, the furies soon rendered themselves impotent by their own excesses. Perceiving that the attempt was a complete failure, the warriors interfered to put a stop to this scene; and this so much the more, because preparations were now seriously making for the com-

mencement of the real tortures, or that which would put the fortitude of the sufferer to the test of severe bodily pain. A sudden and unlooked-for announcement, that proceeded from one of the lookouts, a boy ten or twelve years old, however, put a momentary check to the whole proceedings. As this interruption has a close connection with the *dénouement* of our story, it shall be given in a separate chapter.

## CHAPTER XXX

*So deem'st thou—so each mortal deems  
Of that which is from that which seems;  
But other harvest here  
Than that which peasant's scythe demands,  
Was gathered in by sterner hands,  
With bayonet, blade, and spear.*

SCOTT

It exceeded Deerslayer's power to ascertain what had produced the sudden pause in the movements of his enemies, until the fact was revealed in the due course of events. He perceived that much agitation prevailed among the women in particular, while the warriors rested on their arms, in a sort of dignified expectation. It was plain no alarm was excited, though it was not equally apparent that a friendly occurrence produced the delay. Rivenoak was evidently apprised of all, and by a gesture of his arm he appeared to direct the circle to remain unbroken, and for each person to await the issue in the situation he, or she, then occupied. It required but a minute or two to bring an explanation of this singular and mysterious pause, which was soon terminated by the appearance of Judith, on the exterior of the line of bodies, and her ready admission within its circle.

If Deerslayer was startled by this unexpected arrival, well knowing that the quick-witted girl could claim none of that exemption from the penalties of captivity that was so cheerfully accorded to her feeble-minded sister, he was equally astonished at the guise 40 in which she came. All her ordinary forest attire, neat and becoming as this usually was, had been laid aside for the brocade that has been already mentioned, and which had once before wrought so great and magical an effect in her appearance. Nor was this all. Accustomed to see the ladies of the garrison, in the formal, gala attire of the day, and familiar with the more critical niceties of these matters, the girl had managed to complete her dress, in a way to leave nothing strikingly defective in its details, or even to betray an



incongruity that would have been detected by one practiced in the mysteries of the toilet. Head, feet, arms, hands, bust, and drapery, were all in harmony, as female attire was then deemed attractive and harmonious; and the end she aimed at, that of imposing on the uninstructed senses of the savages, by causing them to believe their guest was a woman of rank and importance, might well have succeeded with those whose habits had taught them to discriminate between persons. Judith, in addition to her rare native beauty, had a singular grace of person, and her mother had imparted enough of her own deportment to prevent any striking or offensive vulgarity of manner; so that, sooth to say, the gorgeous dress might have been worse bestowed in nearly every particular. Had it been displayed in a capital, a thousand might have worn it, before one could have been found to do more credit to its gay colors, glossy satins, and rich laces, than the beautiful creature whose person it now aided to adorn.

The effect of such an apparition had not been miscalculated. The instant Judith found herself within the circle, she was, in a degree, compensated for the fearful personal risk she ran, by the unequivocal sensation of surprise and admiration produced by her appearance. The grim old warriors uttered their favorite exclamation, "Hugh!" The younger men were still more sensibly overcome, and even the women were not backward in letting open manifestations of pleasure escape them. It was seldom that these untutored children of the forest had ever seen any white female above the commonest sort, and, as to dress, never before had so much splendor shone before their eyes. The gayest uniforms of both French and English seemed dull compared with the luster of the brocade; and while the rare personal beauty of the wearer added to the effect produced by its hues, the attire did not fail to adorn that beauty in a way which surpassed even the hopes of its wearer. Decrslayer himself was astounded, and this quite as much by the brilliant picture the girl presented, as at the indifference to consequences with which she had braved the danger of the step she had taken. Under such circumstances, all waited for the visitor to explain her object, which to most of the spectators seemed as inexplicable as her appearance.

"Which of these warriors is the principal chief?" demanded Judith of Decrslayer, as soon as she found it was expected that she should open the com-

munications; "my errand is too important to be delivered to any of inferior rank. First explain to the Hurons what I say; then give an answer to the question I have put."

Decrslayer quietly complied, his auditors greedily listening to the interpretation of the first words that fell from so extraordinary a vision. The demand seemed perfectly in character for one who had every appearance of an exalted rank herself. Rivenoak gave an appropriate reply, by presenting himself before his fair visitor in a way to leave no doubt that he was entitled to all the consideration he claimed.

"I can believe this, Huron," resumed Judith, enacting her assumed part with a steadiness and dignity that did credit to her powers of imitation, for she strove to impart to her manner the condescending courtesy she had once observed in the wife of a general officer at a similar though a more amicable scene: "I can believe you to be the principal person of this party; I see in your countenance the marks of thought and reflection. To you, then, I must make my communication."

"Let the Flower of the Woods speak," returned the old chief courteously, as soon as her address had been translated so that all might understand it. "If her words are as pleasant as her looks, they will never quit my ears; I shall hear them long after the winter of Canada has killed the flowers, and frozen all the speeches of summer."

This admiration was grateful to one constituted like Judith, and contributed to aid her self-possession, quite as much as it fed her vanity. Smiling involuntarily, or in spite of her wish to seem reserved, she proceeded in her plot.

"Now, Hurons," she continued, "listen to my words. Your eyes tell you that I am no common woman. I will not say I am queen of this country; *she* is afar off, in a distant land; but under our gracious monarchs, there are many degrees of rank; one of these I fill. What that rank is precisely, it is unnecessary for me to say, since you would not understand it. For that information you must trust your eyes. You *see* what I am; you must *feel* that in listening to my words, you listen to one who can be your friend, or your enemy, as you treat her."

This was well uttered, with a due attention to manner, and a steadiness of tone that was really surprising, considering all the circumstances of the case. It was well, though simply rendered into the Indian

dialect, too, and it was received with a respect and gravity that augured favorably for the girl's success. But Indian thought is not easily traced to its sources. Judith waited with anxiety to hear the answer, filled with hope even while she doubted. Rivenoak was a ready speaker, and he answered as promptly as comported with the notions of Indian decorum; that peculiar people seeming to think a short delay respectful, inasmuch as it manifests that the words already heard have been duly weighed.

"My daughter is handsomer than the wild roses of Ontario; her voice is pleasant to the ear as the song of the wren," answered the cautious and wily chief, who of all the band stood alone in not being fully imposed on by the magnificent and unusual appearance of Judith; but who distrusted even while he wondered: "the humming-bird is not much larger than the bee; yet its feathers are as gay as the tail of the peacock. The Great Spirit sometimes puts very bright clothes on very little animals. Still, He covers the moose with coarse hair. These things are beyond the understanding of poor Indians, who can only comprehend what they see and hear. No doubt my daughter has a very large wigwam, somewhere about the lake; the Hurons have not found it, on account of their ignorance?"

"I have told you, chief, that it would be useless to state my rank and residence, inasmuch as you would not comprehend them. You must trust to your eyes for this knowledge; what red-man is there who cannot see? This blanket that I wear is not the blanket of a common squaw; these ornaments are such as the wives and daughters of chiefs only appear in. Now, listen and hear why I have come alone among your people, and hearken to the errand that has brought me here. The Yengeese have young men as well as the Hurons; and plenty of them, too; this you well know."

"The Yengeese are as plenty as the leaves on the trees! This every Huron knows and feels."

"I understand you, chief. Had I brought a party with me, it might have caused trouble. My young men and your young men would have looked angrily at each other; especially had my young men seen that pale-face bound for the tortures. He is a great hunter, and is much loved by all the garrisons, far and near. There would have been blows about him, and the trail of the Iroquois back to the Canadas would have been marked with blood."

"There is so much blood on it now," returned the

chief, gloomily. "that it blinds our eyes. My young men see that it is all Huron."

"No doubt; and more Huron blood would be spilt, had I come surrounded with pale-faces. I have heard of Rivenoak, and have thought it would be better to send him back in peace to his village, that he might leave his women and children behind him; if he then wished to come for our scalps, we would meet him. He loves animals made of ivory, and little rifles. See; I have brought some with me to show him. I am his friend. When he has packed up these things among his goods, he will start for his village, before any of my young men can overtake him; and then he will show his people in Canada what riches they can come to seek, now that our great fathers, across the Salt Lake, have sent each other the war-hatchet. I will lead back, with me, this great hunter, of whom I have need to keep my house in venison."

Judith, who was sufficiently familiar with Indian phraseology, endeavored to express her ideas in the sententious manner common to those people; and she succeeded even beyond her own expectations. Deerslayer did her full justice in the translation, and this so much the more readily, since the girl carefully abstained from uttering any direct untruth; a homage she paid to the young man's known aversion to falsehood, which he deemed a meanness altogether unworthy of a white man's gifts. The offering of the two remaining elephants, and of the pistols already mentioned, one of which was all the worse for the recent accident, produced a lively sensation among the Hurons generally, though Rivenoak received it coldly, notwithstanding the delight with which he had first discovered the probable existence of a creature with two tails. In a word, this cool and sagacious savage was not so easily imposed on as his followers; and with a sentiment of honor that half the civilized world would have deemed supererogatory, he declined the acceptance of a bribe that he felt no disposition to earn by a compliance with the donor's wishes.

"Let my daughter keep her two-tailed hog to eat when venison is scarce," he drily answered; "and the little gun, which has two muzzles. The Hurons will kill deer when they are hungry; and they have long rifles to fight with. This hunter cannot quit my young men now; they wish to know if he is as stout-hearted as he boasts himself to be."

"That I deny, Huron," interrupted Deerslayer with

warmth; "yes, that I downright deny, as ag'in truth and reason. No man has heard me *boast*, and no man shall, though ye flay me alive, and then roast the quivering flesh, with your own infarnal devices and cruelties! I may be humble, and misfortunate, and your prisoner; but I'm no boaster, by my very gifts."

"My young pale-face *boasts* he is *no* boaster," returned the crafty chief. "He *must* be right. I hear a strange bird singing. It has very rich feathers. No Huron ever before saw such feathers! They will be 10 ashamed to go back to their village and tell their people that they let their prisoner go on account of the song of this strange bird, and not be able to give the *name* of the bird. They do not know how to say whether it is a wren or a cat-bird. This would be a great disgrace; my young men would not be allowed to travel in the woods without taking their mothers with them to tell them the name of the birds!"

"You can ask my name of your prisoner," returned the girl. "It is Judith; and there is a great deal of the 20 history of Judith in the pale-faces' best book, the Bible. If I am a bird of fine feathers, I have also my name."

"No," answered the wily Huron, betraying the artifice he had so long practiced, by speaking in English, with tolerable accuracy, "I not ask prisoner. He tired; want rest. I ask my daughter, with feeble-mind. She speak truth. Come here, daughter; you answer. *Your* name, Hetty?"

"Ycs, that's what they call me," returned the girl, 30 "though it's written Esther, in the Bible."

"He write *him* in Bible, too! All write in Bible. No matter—what *her* name?"

"That's Judith, and it's so written in the Bible, though father sometimes called her Jude. That's my sister Judith, Thomas Hutter's daughter—Thomas Hutter, whom you called the Muskrat; though he was *no* muskrat, but a man, like yourselves—he lived in a house on the water, and that was enough for *you*!"

A smile of triumph gleamed on the hard-wrinkled 40 countenance of the chief, when he found how completely his appeal to the truth-loving Hetty had succeeded. As for Judith, herself, the moment her sister was questioned, she saw that all was lost; for no sign, or even entreaty, could have induced the right-feeling girl to utter a falsehood. To attempt to impose a daughter of the Muskrat on the savages as a princess, or a great lady, she knew would be idle; and she saw her bold and ingenious expedient for liberating the

captive fail, through one of the simplest and most natural causes that could be imagined. She turned her eye on Deerslayer, therefore, as if imploring him to interfere, to save them both.

"It will not do, Judith," said the young man, in answer to this appeal, which he understood, though he saw its uselessness. "It will not do. 'Twas a bold idee, and fit for a general's lady; but yonder Mingo—" Rivenoak had withdrawn to a little distance, and was out of earshot—"but yonder Mingo is an uncommon man, and not to be deceived by any onnat'ral sarcumventions. Things must come afore him in their right order, to draw a cloud afore *his* eyes! 'Twas too much to attempt making him fancy that a queen, or a great lady, lived in these mountains; and no doubt he thinks the fine clothes you wear are some of the plunder of your own father—or, at least, of him who once passed for your father; as quite likely it was, if all they say is true."

"At all events, Deerslayer, my presence here will save you for a time. They will hardly attempt torturing you before my face!"

"Why not, Judith? Do you think they will treat a woman of the pale-faces more tenderly than they treat their own? It's true that your sex will most likely save you from the torments, but it will not save your liberty, and may not save your scalp. I wish you hadn't come, my good Judith; it can do no good to me, while it may do great harm to yourself."

"I can share your fate," the girl answered, with generous enthusiasm. "They shall not injure you while I stand by, if in my power to prevent it—besides—"

"Besides what, Judith? What means have you to stop Indian cruelties, or to avert Injin deviltries?"

"None, perhaps, Deerslayer," answered the girl, with firmness; "but I can suffer with my friends—die with them if necessary."

"Ah! Judith—suffer you may; but die you will not until the Lord's time shall come. It's little likely that one of your sex and beauty will meet with a harder fate than to become the wife of a chief, if indeed your white inclinations can stoop to match with an Indian. 'Twould have been better had you stayed in the ark, or the castle—but what has been done, is done. You was about to say something, when you stopped at 'besides?' "

"It might not be safe to mention it here, Deerslayer," the girl hurriedly answered, moving past him

carelessly, that she might speak in a low tone; "half an hour is all in all to us. None of your friends are idle."

The hunter replied merely by a grateful look. Then he turned towards his enemies, as if ready again to face the torments. A short consultation had passed among the elders of the band, and by this time they also were prepared with their decision. The merciful purpose of Rivenoak had been much weakened by the artifice of Judith, which, failing of its real object, was likely to produce results the very opposite of those she had anticipated. This was natural; the feeling being aided by the resentment of an Indian, who found how near he had been to becoming the dupe of an inexperienced girl. By this time Judith's real character was fully understood—the widespread reputation of her beauty contributing to the exposure. As for the unusual attire, it was confounded with the profound mystery of the animals with two tails, and, for the moment, lost its influence.

When Rivenoak, therefore, faced the captive again, it was with an altered countenance. He had abandoned the wish of saving him, and was no longer disposed to retard the more serious part of the torture. This change of sentiment was, in effect, communicated to the young men, who were already eagerly engaged in making their preparations for the contemplated scene. Fragments of dried wood were rapidly collected near the sapling, the splinters which it was intended to thrust into the flesh of the victim, previously to lighting, were all collected, and the thongs were already produced, that were again to bind him to the tree. All this was done in profound silence, Judith watching every movement with breathless expectation, while Deerslayer himself stood seemingly as unmoved as one of the pines of the hills. When the warriors advanced to bind him, however, the young man glanced at Judith, as if to inquire whether resistance or submission were most advisable. By a significant gesture she counselled the last; and, in a minute, he was once more fastened to the tree, a helpless object of any insult or wrong that might be offered. So eagerly did everyone now act, that nothing was said. The fire was immediately lighted in the pile, and the end of all was anxiously expected.

It was not the intention of the Hurons absolutely to destroy the life of their victim by means of fire. They designed merely to put his physical fortitude to the severest proofs it could endure, short of that

extremity. In the end, they fully intended to carry his scalp with them into their village, but it was their wish first to break down his resolution, and to reduce him to the level of a complaining sufferer. With this view, the pile of brush and branches had been placed at a proper distance, or one at which it was thought the heat would soon become intolerable, though it might not be immediately dangerous. As often happened, however, on these occasions, this distance had been miscalculated, and the flames began to wave their forked tongues in a proximity to the face of the victim that would have proved fatal in another instant, had not Hetty rushed through the crowd, armed with a stick, and scattered the blazing pile in a dozen directions. More than one hand was raised to strike the presumptuous intruder to the earth; but the chiefs prevented the blows, by reminding their irritated followers of the state of her mind. Hetty, herself, was insensible to the risk she ran; but, as soon as she had performed this bold act, she stood looking about her, in frowning resentment, as if to rebuke the crowd of attentive savages for their cruelty.

"God bless you, dearest sister, for that brave and ready act!" murmured Judith, herself unnerved so much as to be incapable of exertion; "Heaven itself has sent you on its holy errand."

"'Twas well-meant, Judith," rejoined the victim; "'twas excellently meant, and 'twas timely, though it may prove untimely in the end! What is to come to pass must come to pass soon, or 'twill quickly be too late. Had I drawn in one mouthful of that flame in breathing, the power of man couldn't save my life; and you see that, this time, they've so bound my forehead as not to leave my head the smallest chance. 'Twas well meant; but it might have been more merciful to let the flames act their part."

"Cruel, heartless Hurons!" exclaimed the still indignant Hetty; "would you burn a man and a Christian as you would burn a log of wood? Do you never read your Bibles? or do you think God will forget such things?"

A gesture from Rivenoak caused the scattered brands to be collected; fresh wood was brought, even the women and children busying themselves eagerly in the gathering of dried sticks. The flame was just kindling a second time when an *Indian* female pushed through the circle, advanced to the heap, and with her foot dashed aside the lighted twigs in time to prevent the conflagration. A yell followed this

second disappointment; but when the offender turned towards the circle, and presented the countenance of Hist, it was succeeded by a common exclamation of pleasure and surprise. For a minute, all thought of pursuing the business in hand was forgotten, and young and old crowded around the girl, in haste to demand an explanation of her sudden and unlooked-for return. It was at this critical instant that Hist spoke to Judith in a low voice, placed some small object, unseen, in her hand, and then turned to meet the salutations of the Huron girls, with whom she was personally a great favorite. Judith recovered her self-possession, and acted promptly. The small, keen-edged knife, that Hist had given to the other, was passed by the latter into the hands of Hetty, as the safest and least-suspected medium of transferring it to Deerslayer. But the feeble intellect of the last defeated the well-grounded hopes of all three. Instead of first cutting loose the hands of the victim, and then concealing the knife in his clothes, in readiness for action at the most available instant, she went to work herself, with earnestness and simplicity, to cut the thongs that bound his head, that he might not again be in danger of inhaling flames. Of course this deliberate procedure was seen, and the hands of Hetty were arrested ere she had more than liberated the upper portion of the captive's body, not including his arms, below the elbows. This discovery at once pointed distrust towards Hist; and, to Judith's surprise, when questioned on the subject, that spirited girl was not disposed to deny her agency in what had passed.

"Why should I not help the Deerslayer?" the girl demanded, in the tones of a firm-minded woman. "He is the brother of a Delaware chief; my heart is all Delaware. Come forth, miserable Briarthorn, and wash the Iroquois paint from your face; stand before the Hurons, the crow that you are; you would eat the carrion of your own dead, rather than starve. Put him face to face with Deerslayer, chiefs and warriors; I will show you how great a knave you have been keeping in your tribe."

This bold language, uttered in their own dialect, and with a manner full of confidence, produced a deep sensation among the Hurons. Treachery is always liable to distrust; and, though the recreant Briarthorn had endeavored to serve the enemy well, his exertions and assiduities had gained for him little more than toleration. His wish to obtain Hist for a wife had first

induced him to betray her and his own people; but serious rivals to his first project had risen up among his new friends, weakening still more their sympathies with treason. In a word, Briarthorn had been barely permitted to remain in the Huron encampment, where he was as closely and as jealously watched as Hist herself; seldom appearing before the chiefs, and sedulously keeping out of view of Deerslayer, who, until this moment, was ignorant even of his presence. Thus summoned, however, it was impossible to remain in the background. "Wash the Iroquois paint from his face," he did not; for when he stood in the center of the circle, he was so disguised in these new colors, that, at first, the hunter did not recognize him. He assumed an air of defiance, notwithstanding, and haughtily demanded what any could say against "Briarthorn."

"Ask yourself that," continued Hist, with spirit, though her manner grew less concentrated; and there was a slight air of abstraction that became observable to Deerslayer and Judith, if to no others. "Ask that of your own heart, sneaking woodchuck of the Delawares; come not here with the face of an innocent man. Go look in the spring; see the colors of your enemies on your lying skin; and then come back and boast how you ran from your tribe, and took the blanket of the French for your covering! Paint yourself as bright as a humming-bird, you will still be black as the crow."

Hist had been so uniformly gentle while living with the Hurons, that they now listened to her language with surprise. As for the delinquent, his blood boiled in his veins; and it was well for the pretty speaker that it was not in his power to execute the revenge he burned to inflict on her, in spite of his pretended love.

"Who wishes Briarthorn?" he sternly asked. "If this pale-face is tired of life; if afraid of Indian torments, speak, Rivenoak; I will send him after the warriors we have lost."

"No, chief; no, Rivenoak," eagerly interrupted Hist. "The Deerslayer fears nothing; least of all, a crow! Unbind him—cut his withes—place him face to face with this cawing bird; then let us see which is tired of life."

Hist made a forward movement, as if to take a knife from a young man, and perform the office she had mentioned, in person; but an aged warrior interposed, at a sign from Rivenoak. This chief watched

all the girl did, with distrust; for, even while speaking in her most boastful language, and in the steadiest manner, there was an air of uncertainty and expectation about her, that could not escape so close an observer. She acted well; but two or three of the old men were equally satisfied that it was merely acting. Her proposal to release Deerslayer, therefore, was rejected; and the disappointed Hist found herself driven back from the sapling, at the very moment she fancied herself about to be successful. At the same time, the circle, which had got to be crowded and confused, was enlarged, and brought once more into order. Rivenoak now announced the intention of the old men again to proceed; the delay having been continued long enough, and leading to no result.

"Stop, Huron; stay, chiefs!" exclaimed Judith, scarce knowing what she said, or why she interposed, unless to obtain time; "for God's sake, a single minute longer—"

The words were cut short by another and still more extraordinary interruption. A young Indian came bounding through the Huron ranks, leaping into the very center of the circle, in a way to denote the utmost confidence, or temerity bordering on fool-hardiness. Five or six sentinels were still watching the lake at different and distant points; and it was the first impression of Rivenoak that one of these had come in with tidings of import. Still, the movements of the stranger were so rapid, and his war-dress, which scarcely left him more drapery than an antique statue, had so little distinguishing about it, that, at the first moment, it was impossible to ascertain whether he were friend or foe. Three leaps carried this warrior to the side of Deerslayer, whose withes were cut in the twinkling of an eye, with a quickness and precision that left the prisoner perfect master of his limbs. Not till this was effected, did the stranger bestow a glance on any other object; then he turned, and showed the astonished Hurons the noble brow, fine person, and eagle eye of a young warrior in the paint and panoply of a Delaware. He held a rifle in each hand, the butts of both resting on the earth, while from one dangled its proper pouch and horn. This was Killdeer, which, even as he looked boldly and in defiance on the crowd around him, he suffered to fall back into the hands of its proper owner. The presence of two armed men, though it was in their midst, startled the Hurons. Their rifles were scattered about against the different trees, and their only weapons were their knives and

tomahawks. Still, they had too much self-possession to betray fear. It was little likely that so small a force would assail so strong a band; and each man expected some extraordinary proposition to succeed so decisive a step. The stranger did not seem disposed to disappoint them; he prepared to speak.

"Hurons," he said, "this earth is very big. The great lakes are big, too; there is room beyond them for the Iroquois; there is room for the Delawares on this side. I am Chingachgook, the son of Uncas; the kinsman of Tamenund. This is my betrothed; that pale-face is my friend. My heart was heavy when I missed him; I followed him to your camp to see that no harm happened to him. All the Delaware girls are waiting for Wah; they wonder that she stays away so long. Come, let us say farewell, and go on our path."

"Hurons, this is your mortal enemy, the Great Serpent of them you hate!" cried Briarthorn. "If he escape, blood will be in your moccasin prints, from this spot to the Canadas. I am *all* Huron."

As the last words were uttered, the traitor cast his knife at the naked breast of the Delaware. A quick movement of the arm on the part of Hist, who stood near, turned aside the blow, the dangerous weapon burying its point in a pine. At the next instant, a similar weapon glanced from the hand of the Serpent, and quivered in the recreant's heart. A minute had scarcely elapsed from the moment in which Chingachgook bounded into the circle, and that in which Briarthorn fell, like a log, dead in his tracks. The rapidity of events had prevented the Hurons from acting; but this catastrophe permitted no farther delay. A common exclamation followed, and the whole party was in motion. At this instant, a sound unusual to the woods was heard, and every Huron, male and female, paused to listen, with ears erect and faces filled with expectation. The sound was regular and heavy, as if the earth were struck with beetles. Objects became visible among the trees of the background, and a body of troops was seen advancing with measured tread. They came upon the charge, the scarlet of the king's livery shining among the bright green foliage of the forest.

The scene that followed is not easily described. It was one in which wild confusion, despair, and frenzied efforts, were so blended, as to destroy the unity and distinctness of the action. A general yell burst from the enclosed Hurons; it was succeeded by

the hearty cheers of England. Still, not a musket or rifle was fired, though that steady, measured tramp continued, and the bayonet was seen gleaming in advance of a line that counted nearly sixty men. The Hurons were taken at a fearful disadvantage. On three sides was the water, while their formidable and trained foes cut them off from flight on the fourth. Each warrior rushed for his arms, and then all on the point, man, woman, and child, eagerly sought the covers. In this scene of confusion and dismay, however, nothing could surpass the discretion and coolness of Deerslayer. His first care was to place Judith and Hist behind trees, and he looked for Hetty; but she had been hurried away in the crowd of Huron women. This effected, he threw himself on a flank of the retiring Hurons, who were inclining off towards the southern margin of the point in the hope of escaping through the water. Deerslayer watched his

opportunity, and finding two of his recent tormentors in a range, his rifle first broke the silence of the terrific scene. The bullet brought both down at one discharge. This drew a general fire from the Hurons, and the rifle and war-cry of the Serpent were heard in the clamor. Still the trained men returned no answering volley, the whoop and pierce of Hurry alone being heard on their side, if we except the short, prompt word of authority, and that heavy, measured, and menacing tread. Presently, however, the shrieks, groans, and denunciations that usually accompany the use of the bayonet, followed. That terrible and deadly weapon was glutted in vengeance. The scene that succeeded was one of those, of which so many have occurred in our own times, in which neither age nor sex forms an exemption to the lot of a savage warfare.

## WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT (1794-1878)

Identified for the sake of convenience with the Knickerbocker group of writers, who dominated the American literary scene from the War of 1812 to the rise of the Transcendentalists during the thirties, Bryant was a New Yorker by adoption only. Upon going to New York in 1825 (aged thirty-one), he shared with Cooper and Irving the literary leadership, and for the next fifty-three years he was a commanding figure as editor, publicist, essayist, critic, orator, and poet. But while he was identified, during most of his mature life with New York City, he belongs to New England by birth, by inheritance, by early associations, by almost every shaping influence on his literary personality. Maturing early and changing little afterwards, the Bryant who left his native regions to become one of the most influential editors of the century was already, in all essentials, the Bryant whom we know best today. His first volume of forty-four pages of 1821, contains most, and the second, of 1832, contains almost all, of what is essential in Bryant's poetry. In the half-century during which he added considerably to the bulk of these early volumes, he varied his emphasis, constructions, and forms, but added virtually nothing basically new to the content of his poetry. There was little change in what he valued in nature and in human nature, or how he envisaged it in his imagination; or how, after it had passed through the alembic of his mind and character, he gave it expression. Although he subsequently published several more volumes of verse (including many fine poems), they contain few revelations and no radically new forms. His life, however busy and fruitful, was relatively calm and uneventful. It included, neither during his middle nor later life, many soul-stirring or deeply humanizing experiences. As the editor of one of the most influential newspapers in America, he was stirred by portentous events and important social issues to write pungent editorials, but they seldom touched his poetic nature and evoked few poems in him. European travel, while producing several series of travel letters, came too late to effect such a marked intellectual change in him as it made in Emerson, or to give him a new poetic outlook, as it did for Longfellow. The death of his wife, in 1866, profoundly

stirred him, but at seventy-two he could turn his grief into the quiet channel of translating Homer. In short, what had been needful for the development of his poetic personality happened to him before he left the haunts of his boyhood, and accordingly his early life is of particular importance by way of explaining the content and form of his poetry.

Born November 3, 1794, at Cummington, in the Berkshire hills of western Massachusetts, Bryant was the son of genteel parents who traced their descent directly to the Mayflower pilgrims. The father was a kindly, cultivated physician, staunchly orthodox in his religion, and Federalist in his political views. When Dr. Peter Bryant, himself fond of poetry, heard his precocious son praying that he "might receive the gift of poetic genius and write verses that might endure," the father undertook to introduce the lad to "Johnson deep," "Addison refined," and especially "Pope's celestial fire." Under promptings such as these, the lad of nine began to versify after the manner of the pseudo-classical English poets, and in 1804 he had the satisfaction of seeing his "Description of a School" published in the *Hampshire Gazette* of Northampton. Four years later his proud father caused to be published in Boston young Bryant's satirical poem on Jefferson, *The Embargo, or a Sketch of the Times*. Besides illustrating his thorough schooling in the conventional couplets of Pope, *The Embargo* contains evidence of the lad's complete indoctrination in Federalist principles by his father. Occasioned by the unpopularity of Jefferson's Embargo of 1807, the poem voices all the negative aspects of the Federalist attack upon the stupidity of all Democrats, the vileness of the "French intrigue," and the alleged villainy of President Jefferson, to whom the young Federalist issued the following invitation:

Go, wretch, resign the presidential chair,  
Disclose thy secret features foul or fair,  
Go, search, with curious eyes, for horned frogs,  
'Mongst the wild wastes of Louisianian bogs;  
Or where Ohio rolls his turbid stream,  
Dig for huge bones, thy glory and thy theme; . . .  
But quit to abler hands, the helm of state,  
Nor image ruin on thy country's fate!



Just as he absorbed his political opinions from his father, so he took the impress of religious orthodoxy from his elders of the Cummington community, when he wrote in 1807:

Then let us tread, as lowly Jesus trod,  
The path that leads the sinner to his God;  
Keep Heaven's bright mansions ever in our eyes,  
Press tow'rd's the mark and seize the glorious prize.

All these juvenile poems illustrate the ready dependence of the young poet for his measures upon the eighteenth-century wits of Queen Anne's England. As yet utterly unmindful of the revolution that was going forward under the auspices of Wordsworth and Coleridge, Bryant set himself to write—

With classic purity, unstudied ease,  
To sense instructive, pleasing to the ear,  
Correct, yet flowing, elegant and clear.

That is, his early verse was all written from a Federalist, Calvinist, and classicist point of view. There was as yet nothing to suggest the turn he was to make within the next decade toward Democratic, Unitarian, and romantic principles.

Most prominent among the agencies influencing his conversion from conservatism to liberalism was his contact with rational currents of thought fashionable among the students of Williams College, whither he went in 1810 as a sophomore. The break with the religious orthodoxy of his youth is announced in "Thanatopsis," the first draft of which was written in 1811, shortly before he reached his seventeenth birthday. The subject itself, Death, or more particularly, How shall a man approach the grave? was not new. Bryant had himself encountered it in the poems of Henry Kirke White, Robert Blair, and others of the "graveyard" school of English poets. Their influence on the poem is marked. What is new is its unorthodox, that is, un-Christian, approach to death. Instead of any reference to the conventional doctrines of election or of rewards and punishments, of Calvin or of Christ, the young rebel offers the stoical view of death as a welcome release from the miseries of human existence. Instead of the usual consolatory assertion of the soul's immortality and the perpetuation of individual being or of death as a progression to the eternal bliss of Heaven, there is only the deistic doctrine that the grave ends all:

Earth that nourished thee, shall claim  
Thy growth, to be resolved to earth again,  
And, lost each human trace, surrendering up  
Thine individual being, shalt thou go  
To mix forever with the elements,  
To be a brother to the insensible rock  
And to the sluggish clod . . .

The only consolation offered is that this is the fate of all men. Since none can escape it, it behooves a man to make the most of it by meeting death heroically, that is, stoically.

By 1817, when he wrote "To a Waterfowl," he had moderated his views to an expression of faith in a supernatural power above, who could be relied on to lead man's steps aright just as God guides the waterfowl from "zone to zone" in its flight; and in "The Forest Hymn" of 1825 the groves are called "God's first temples." Although he often employed familiar religious imagery in his later poems, he never returned to the Calvinist faith of his youth, but adopted the naturalistic philosophy of the Unitarians. Unable to accept the Trinity, he identified God with the "Great First Cause" in "An Evening Reverie" (1841) and with the "Great Movement of the Universe" in "The Flood of Years" (1876). He worshipped a God who was spiritual rather than anthropomorphic—who typified universal love and benevolence among men, and who could be contemplated in the universality of the visible creation.

In his political views he experienced a similar conversion. Among the first causes leading to an examination of the Federalism inherited from his father was the hot sectionalism engendered by the War of 1812. He was himself ready at one time to enlist in the Massachusetts militia and to resist forcibly federal usurpation. But just about the time he attained his majority and set out to practice law, the once powerful Federal party went into a decided decline, and party alignments grew more indistinct. In the meantime, Bryant had been disappointed, after his year at Williams College, in not being able to continue his education at Yale. Instead he turned to studying law in several lawyers' offices at Worthington and Bridgewater. Admitted to the bar in 1815, he practiced first at Plainfield and from 1816 to 1825 at Great Barrington. During these years his reading in the law and in history, together with what he saw of the practice of political principles, made him dissatisfied with the parochialism of his inherited political views. Before he removed to New York City in 1825, he had become a liberal devoted to a broad program of reform, including world peace, emancipation from slavery, free trade, and democratic principles of government. In short, he was prepared, in all essentials, for the great role that he was to play for the next fifty years as a liberal and democratic editor of the influential *New York Evening Post*.

No less radical than the change in his religious and political thinking was his conversion from classicism to romanticism in his literary theory and practice. It went forward as an attendant development with his

political and religious liberalism. Although he vowed in 1815, when he was admitted to the practice of law, that he would devote himself entirely to the work of his profession, and that he would "tune the rural lay no more," he admitted also—

I cannot forget with what fervid devotion  
I worshipped the visions of verse and of fame.

However determined his resolution, poetry was an irresistible effervescence in his blood that would not be denied. Immediately upon writing the first draft of "Thanatopsis" in 1811, he made the discovery of Wordsworth and Coleridge's *Lyrical Ballads*. "A thousand springs," he said, "seemed to gush up at once into my heart and the face of Nature, of a sudden, to change into a strange freshness and life." "The Yellow Violet," written in 1814, and "Inscription for the Entrance to a Wood," of the next year, bear witness of how the earlier influences of White, Blair, Cowper, and Thomson (as these are manifest in "Thanatopsis," for example) were transmuted into the fullness of a romanticist's worship of nature under Wordsworthian influence. This new love of nature "in all her visible forms" led him often to forsake his Coke and Blackstone for ramblings among the hills and in the valleys—

Till I felt the dark power o'er my reveries stealing,  
From the gloom of the thickets that over me hung,  
And the thoughts that awoke, in that rapture of feeling,  
Were formed into verse as they rose to my tongue.

A few years later he recalled how he had sought to break the spell that held him long, "the dear, dear witchery of song," resolved that "the poet's idle lore" should waste his "prime of years no more," forgetful that wheresoever he looked he saw "Nature's everlasting smile" recalling him to "the love of song." Thus Wordsworth and nature reclaimed him to the sweet uses of poetry.

In the meantime his earliest compositions under the new impetus of nature had been acclaimed notable successes. The reception of "Thanatopsis" itself had been flattering. When the verses were first sent by Bryant's father to the editor of the *North American Review*, the latter, doubting their authenticity, read them to his associate, who told him, "You have been imposed upon; no one on this side the Atlantic is capable of writing such verses." Upon being assured that they were indeed Bryant's own, they were printed in the *North American Review* for September, 1817, together with the "Inscription for the Entrance to a Wood," with its new Wordsworthian notes. "To a Waterfowl" was no less popular on its first appear-

ance in 1818. Shortly thereafter Bryant fell in love with Fanny Fairchild, whom he apostrophized, after the manner of Wordsworth's Lucy poems, in "Oh Fairest of the Rural Maids" (written in 1820). From now on, nature worship, love, and poetic inspiration went forward hand in hand under romantic auspices. Like Wordsworth, he felt himself a "dedicated spirit," seeking emanations of the indwelling life of nature. Like Wordsworth, too, he found in nature forces to stimulate and delight as well as to soothe and heal the spirit of man. He began to show the typical romantic interest in simple types of humanity and to regard the Indian as an example of "the noble savage race." The prairie and the pioneer fascinated him, and he became an ardent literary nationalist. Like a romantic antiquary, he searched for traditions, superstitions, and legends of the past to romanticize, even to dabbling in the horrible, the terrible, and the grotesque. New themes needed new forms, and he early began his experimentations in metres and genres that made him eventually one of the most various and versatile of American versifiers. Most important of all, he insisted that while poetry at its best aims to promote "the virtue and welfare of society" by inspiring and perfecting moral character, it originates in the feelings and operates through the imagination. The true office of poetry, he said in an essay on "Early American Verse," published in the *North American Review* for July, 1818, is to "touch the heart"; and in a series of four "Lectures on Poetry," delivered in 1826 before the Athenæum Society of New York, he expounded this theory at greater length. While insisting that "to write fine poetry requires intellectual qualities of the highest order," its humanized moral teachings are not to be presented barefacedly but imaginatively and in terms of beauty: "The most beautiful poetry is that which takes the strongest hold on the feelings, and, if it is really the most beautiful, then it is poetry in the highest sense. . . . The great spring of poetry is emotion. . . . Strong feeling is always a sure guide. It rarely offends against good taste, because it instinctively chooses the most effectual means of communicating itself to others." Forty years later he repeated the same creed in "The Poet" (1864). "The framing of a deathless lay," he observed, is not "the pastime of a drowsy summer's day," but requires a gathering of all the poet's powers, intellectual and emotional:

The secret wouldst thou know  
To touch the heart or fire the blood at will?  
Let thine own eyes o'erflow;  
Let the lips quiver with the passionate thrill;  
Seize the great thought, ere yet its power is past,  
And bind, in words, the fleet emotion fast.

In 1821 Bryant published the first collection of his verses under the simple title of *Poems*. Despite its slender bulk of forty-four pages, it was the most important body of original verse published in America up to that time. During the same year he was invited to read "The Ages" as the annual poem of the Phi Beta Kappa Society at Harvard. The years 1824-25, while he was actively writing for the *United States Literary Gazette* of Boston, represent his most creative period as a poet. Long desirous of moving to Boston, he found no good opportunity there, but in 1825 he accepted the co-editorship of the *New York Review*, and immediately became a member of the literary group forming Cooper's Bread and Cheese Club. Before the year was out he went over as assistant editor of the *New York Evening Post*, whose full editorship he assumed in 1829.

His translation to New York marks the beginning of a new period in his life. Although he continued to write poetry, publishing important collections in 1832, 1844, and later, the poet in him was henceforth subordinate to that of the editor, critic, orator, and man of public affairs. Besides making the *Evening Post* the greatest newspaper of the time and acquiring a considerable private fortune, he spoke with conviction and authority to become one of the most influential voices in the land advocating freedom of speech, the principle of collective bargaining and the right of workmen to strike, free trade, reform legislation for crime and punishment, sound currency and banking methods, and the liberation of subject peoples abroad and of slaves at home. Fortright and vigorous in the statement of his views on such subjects as slavery and workingmen's rights, he was considered by his contemporaries as an aggressive, not to say violent, editor. Indeed, it is said that for many years the *Post* suffered financially because New York businessmen withheld their advertising from the paper on the ground that its editor, in supporting labor, was opposed to their interests. A supporter of Andrew Jackson because of Old Hickory's "simplicity and frankness . . . incorruptible honesty . . . and fearless directness," he was no uncritical follower of party. When Harrison's log-cabin, hard-cider campaign got under way, he was disgusted by what he considered its fraudulent character, and he mercilessly ridiculed coonskin democracy. As the struggle over slavery became acute, he denounced the Fugitive Slave Law as "the most ruffianly act ever authorized by a deliberative assembly." The cause of the Free-Soil men he called "great and righteous"; the Dred Scott decision, a "disgrace"; and John Brown a "martyr and hero." In 1855, having decided that the Democratic party was no longer true to its ideals, he

became active in the organization of the Republican party in the East. From the beginning he was vehement in his denunciation of the doctrine of nullification. When secession came, he said fearlessly and uncompromisingly, "If a state secedes, it is rebellion, and the seceders are traitors." Once war became inevitable, no one was more insistent than he on a vigorous prosecution of the bloody contest, or in the suppression of such disrupting forces as the draft riots in New York City during 1863, himself resolutely braving the unbridled mob violence that convulsed the city for three days. When the Republican party openly allied itself with post-war capitalism, his suspicion and opposition were aroused. Whatever his party allegiance, he was a democrat from principle, demanding tolerance and fairness, championing unpopular causes, and defending the rights of free men.

In the end he came to have less faith in outward than in inward reform. As a progressive utopian during his middle years, he often joined wholeheartedly in efforts to remake society through local and national reform; but fundamentally he was a humanist rather than a humanitarian, holding to the simple faith of his New England rearing that as the perfect state of society is reached only through the emancipation and perfecting of individuals, so the liberty of the individual is the only infallible cure for all ills. In his old age, too, he submitted to the Christian rite of baptism, by a Unitarian minister, and he became a member of the Unitarian church. It is sometimes said that his translation of Homer, after his wife's death in 1866, was a capitulation to classicism. But these modifications of the old Bryant in his political, religious, and literary views constitute not so much a reactionary reversion to conservatism as a moderation or mediation, occasioned by the wisdom of a long life of rich and varied experience.

Despite the wealth and fame that crowned his old age, he continued to live simply and to work earnestly for the cause of liberty. His last public performance, one that hastened his death, was to speak at the unveiling of Mazzini's statue in Central Park. His speech was a plea for human liberty and "the rights and duties of human brotherhood." Throughout his long career, as editor and critic, he was indefatigable in his desire to raise the level of American literature by urging American authors to adopt simplicity, integrity, and freedom as their guiding principles. No one worked more earnestly than he in discovering new talent and encouraging young writers.

His numerous volumes of later verse are all distinguished for evenness and dignity. Occasionally, as in "The Prairie" (1832), "The Battlefield" (1842),

and "The Death of Lincoln" (1865), he matched his earlier performance; but he had no markedly new themes to add to the few elemental ones of his youth: the beauty and beneficence of nature, the sacredness of human freedom, the ebb and flow of human existence, and the dignity and abiding influence of goodness. His last long poem, "The Flood of Years," in 1878, is in the same lofty mood of meditation as is "The Ages" of 1821. His range was narrow, but within its confines he was a master. There is in his poetry no pagan luxuriance and no riot of colorful sensuousness; instead, the ethical idealism of his New England conditioning gives stately, restrained form to his passionate righteousness and his high seriousness. The austerity and frigidity of his verse, popularized by Lowell's humorous lines in "A Fable for Critics," proceed not from a cold heart or an illiberal brain, but from a noble reserve and the fine poise of a mind that lives contentedly within its own resources.

The poet's was for Bryant the highest calling. It proceeded, he said in "The Poet," from

. . . feelings of calm power and mighty sweep,  
Like currents journeying through the windless deep.

He allowed "no empty gusts of passion," no merely "fluent strains" or "smooth array of phrase," no emotional crotchets or erratic sensibilities, to distract him from his high purpose of clothing—

. . . in words of flame  
Thoughts that shall live within the general mind.

Not one of the world's master poets, because he was not pre-eminently endowed with intellectual intensity and imaginative concentration, yet he remains unequalled among American poets as leaving a record markedly true to his poetic aims.

A Puritan-liberal, as Parrington has called him, Bryant, the journalist and critic who sat for fifty years in judgment on matters political and economic as well as cultural, and who reflected in the *Evening Post* a refinement of taste and dignity of character unequalled in earlier American journalism, performed an important service for America quite apart from his contribution to our incipient poetry. He was at once the father of nineteenth-century American journalism and the father of nineteenth-century American nature poetry.

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FROM

*The Embargo,*OR SKETCHES OF THE TIMES; A SATIRE <sup>1</sup>

*When private faith and public trust are sold,  
And traitors barter liberty for gold,  
When fell corruption, dark, and deep, like fate,  
Saps the foundations of a sinking state;  
Then warmer numbers glow through Satire's page,  
And all her smiles are darken'd into rage;  
Then keener indignation fires her eye,  
Then flash her lightnings and her thunders fly.*

ESSAY ON SATIRE

Look where we will, and in whatever land,  
Europe's rich soil, or Afric's burning sand;  
Where the wild savage hunts his wilder prey,  
Or art and science pour their brightest day;  
The monster vice appears before our eyes,  
In naked impudence or gay disguise.

But quit the lesser game, indignant Muse,  
And to thy country turn thy nobler views.  
Ill-fated clime! condemn'd to feel th' extremes  
Of a weak ruler's philosophic dreams; 10  
Driv'n headlong on to ruin's fateful brink  
When will thy Country feel, when will she think!

Wake Muse of Satire, in the cause of trade,  
Thou scourge of miscreants who the laws evade!  
Dart thy keen glances, knit thy threat'ning brows,  
And hurl thine arrows at fair Commerce's foes!

Much injur'd Commerce! 'tis thy falling cause,  
Which, from obscurity, a stripling draws;  
And were his powers but equal to his zeal,  
Thy dastard foes his keen reproach should feel. 20  
Curse of our Nation, source of countless woes,  
From whose dark womb unreckon'd misery flows;  
Th' embargo rages like a sweeping wind,  
Fear low'rs before, and famine stalks behind.  
What words, oh, Muse! can paint the mournful scene,  
The saddening street, the desolated green;  
How hungry labourers leave their toil and sigh,  
And sorrow droops in each desponding eye!

<sup>1</sup> These first 140 lines of Bryant's 244-line satire indicate not only the youth's facility as a versifier in the tradition of the eighteenth-century satirists but also the intolerance of Federalist opposition to Jefferson and his measures.

Bryant never reprinted the poem in any of his collected editions and in later years was irritated whenever it was called to his attention.

See the bold sailor from the ocean torn,  
His element, sink friendless and forlorn! 30  
His suffering spouse the tear of anguish shed,  
His starving children cry in vain for bread!

The farmer, since supporting trade is fled,  
Leaves the rude yoke, and cheerless hangs his head;  
Misfortunes fall, an unremitting shower,  
Debts follow debts, on taxes, taxes pour.  
See in his stores his hoarded produce rot,  
Or sheriff sales his profits bring to naught;  
Disheartening cares in thronging myriads flow,  
Till down he sinks to poverty and woe! 40

Oh, ye bright pair, the blessing of mankind!  
Whom time has sanction'd, and whom fate has join'd,  
COMMERCE, that bears the trident of the main,  
And AGRICULTURE, empress of the plain;  
Who, hand in hand, and heav'n-directed, go  
Diffusing gladness through the world below;  
Whoe'er the wretch, would hurl the flaming brand,  
Of dire disunion, palsied be his hand!  
Like 'Cromwell damn'd to everlasting fame,'  
Let unborn ages execrate his name! 50  
Dark is the scene, yet darker prospects threat,  
And ills may follow unexperienc'd yet!

Oh Heaven! defend, as future seasons roll,  
This western world from Buonaparte's control,  
Preserve our *Freedom*, and our rights secure,  
While truth subsists, and virtue shall endure!

Lo, Austria crouches to the tyrant's stroke,  
And Rome's proud states receive his galling yoke;  
Kings fall before him, for his sway extends  
Where'er his all-subduing course he bends. 60  
See Lusitania's fate, and shall we, say,  
Turn not our feet, that tread the self-same way?

Must we with Belgia, and Helvetia mourn,  
In vile subjection, abject, and forlorn?  
Our laws laid prostrate, and our freedom fled,  
Our independence, boasted valour dead?

We, who seven years erst brav'd Britannia's power,  
By Heaven supported in the gloomiest hour;

For whom our Sages plann'd, our Heroes bled,  
Whom WASHINGTON, our pride and glory led;  
Till Heaven, propitious did our efforts crown,  
With freedom, commerce, plenty, and renown!

70

When shall this land, some courteous angel say,  
Throw off a weak, and erring ruler's sway?  
Rise, injur'd people, vindicate your cause!  
And prove your love of Liberty and laws;  
Oh wrest, sole refuge of a sinking land,  
The sceptre from the slave's imbecile hand!  
Oh ne'er consent, obsequious, to advance  
The *willing vassal* of imperious France!  
Correct that suffrage you misus'd before,  
And lift your voice above a Congress' roar!  
And thou, the scorn of every patriot name,  
Thy country's ruin, and her council's shame!  
Poor servile thing! derision of the brave!  
Who erst from Tarleton fled to Carter's cave;  
Thou, who, when menac'd by perfidious Gaul,  
Didst prostrate to her whisker'd minion fall;  
And when our cash her empty bags supplied,  
Didst meanly strive the foul disgrace to hide;  
Go, wretch, resign the presidential chair,  
Disclose thy secret features foul or fair,  
Go, search, with curious eyes, for horned frogs,  
'Mongst the wild wastes of Louisianian bogs;  
Or where Ohio rolls his turbid stream,  
Dig for huge bones, thy glory and thy theme;  
Go scan, Philosophist; thy \*\*\*\*\* charms,  
And sink supinely in her sable arms;  
But quit to abler hands, the helm of state,  
Nor image ruin on thy country's fate!

80

90

100

But vain are reason, eloquence and art,  
And vain the warm effusions of the heart.  
Ev'n while I sing, see, *faction* urge her claim,  
Mislead with falsehood, and with zeal inflame,  
Lift her broad banner, spread her empire wide,  
And stalk triumphant, with a fury's stride.

She blows her brazen trump, and at the sound,  
A motley throng obedient flock around;  
A mist of changing hue o'er all she flings,  
And darkness perches on her dragon wings!

110

As Johnson deep, as Addison refin'd,  
And skill'd to pour conviction o'er the mind,  
Oh might some Patriot rise! the gloom dispel,  
Chase error's mist, and break her magic spell!

But vain the wish, for hark! the murmuring meed  
Of hoarse applause, from yonder shed proceed;  
Enter, and view the thronging concourse there,  
Intent, with gaping mouth, and stupid stare,  
While in the midst their supple leader stands,  
Harangues aloud, and flourishes his hands;  
To adulation tunes his servile throat,  
And sues, successful, for each blockhead's vote.

120

"Oh, were I made a ruler in the land!  
Your rights, no man can better understand;  
For the dear people, how my bowels yearn!  
That *such* may govern, be your chief concern:  
Then federal tyranny shall flee away,  
And *mild democracy* confirm her sway."  
The powerful influence of the knave's address,  
In capers droll, the foolish dupes confess,  
With *horrid* shouts the affrighted sky is rent,  
And high in air their tatter'd hats are sent.

130

But should truth shine, distinguishingly bright,  
And lay his falsehoods naked to the sight;  
He tries new arts to blind their willing eyes,  
Feeds with new flatteries, hammers out new lies;  
Exerts his influence, urges all his weight,  
To blast the laurels of the good and great;  
Till reconfirm'd the fools uphold him still,  
Their creed, his *dictum*, and their laws, his  
will. . . .

140

1808

*Thanatopsis*<sup>2</sup>

Not that from life, and all its woes  
The hand of death shall set me free;  
Not that this head, shall then repose  
In the low vale most peacefully.

Ah, when I touch time's farthest brink,  
A kinder solace must attend;  
It chills my very soul, to think  
On that dread hour when life must end.

In vain the flatt'ring verse may breathe,  
Of ease from pain, and rest from strife,  
10 There is a sacred dread of death  
Inwoven with the strings of life.

This bitter cup at first was given  
When angry *justice* frown'd severe,  
And 'tis th' eternal doom of heaven  
That man must view the grave with fear.

———Yet a few days, and thee,  
The all-beholding sun, shall see no more,  
In all his course; nor yet in the cold ground,  
Where thy pale form was laid, with many tears, 20  
Nor in th' embrace of ocean shall exist  
Thy image. Earth, that nourished thee, shall claim  
Thy growth, to be resolv'd to earth again;  
And, lost each human trace, surrend'ring up  
Thine individual being, shalt thou go  
To mix forever with the elements,  
To be a brother to th' insensible rock  
And to the sluggish clod, which the rude swain  
Turns with his share, and treads upon. The oak  
Shall send his roots abroad, and pierce thy mould. 30

Yet not to thy eternal resting place  
Shalt thou retire alone—nor couldst thou wish  
Couch more magnificent. Thou shalt lie down  
With patriarchs of the infant world—with kings  
The powerful of the earth—the wise, the good,

<sup>2</sup> "Thanatopsis," literally "A View of Death," in its naturalistic stoicism and generally un-Christian character is indicative of the young poet's change of views from his inherited orthodox principles. The first draft of the poem was written about 1811. The version here printed in the left-hand column was first published in the *North American Review* for September, 1817. It is not certain that Bryant considered the four quatrains which precede the blank verse a part of "Thanatopsis," but the whole is here reproduced as the editors of the *North American Review* published it. In the right-hand column is printed the revised form of the poem as Bryant included it in his first collected edition of *Poems* in 1821.

Fair forms, and hoary seers of ages past,  
All in one mighty sepulchre.—The hills,  
Rock-ribb'd and ancient as the sun,—the vales  
Stretching in pensive quietness between;  
The venerable woods—the floods that move 40  
In majesty—and the complaining brooks,  
That wind among the meads, and make them green,  
Are but the solemn decorations all,  
Of the great tomb of man.—The golden sun,  
The planets, all the infinite host of heaven  
Are glowing on the sad abodes of death,  
10 Through the still lapse of ages. All that tread  
The globe are but a handful to the tribes  
That slumber in its bosom.—Take the wings  
Of morning—and the Borean desert<sup>3</sup> pierce— 50  
Or lose thyself in the continuous woods  
That veil Oregon,<sup>4</sup> where he hears no sound  
Save his own dashings—yet—the dead are there,  
And millions in those solitudes, since first  
The flight of years began, have laid them down  
In their last sleep—the dead reign there alone—  
So shalt thou rest—and what if thou shalt fall  
Unnoticed by the living—and no friend  
Take note of thy departure? Thousands more  
Will share thy destiny.—The tittering world 60  
Dance to the grave. The busy brood of care  
Plod on, and each one chases as before  
His favourite phantom.—Yet all these shall leave  
Their mirth and their employments, and shall come  
And make their bed with thee!———

1811

1817

To him who in the love of Nature holds  
Communion with her visible forms, she speaks  
A various language; for his gayer hours  
She has a voice of gladness, and a smile  
And eloquence of beauty, and she glides  
Into his darker musings, with a mild  
And healing sympathy, that steals away  
Their sharpness, ere he is aware. When thoughts  
Of the last bitter hour come like a blight 10  
Over thy spirit, and sad images  
Of the stern agony, and shroud, and pall,  
And breathless darkness, and the narrow house,

<sup>3</sup> The Arctic wastes.

<sup>4</sup> The Indian name for the Columbia River,

Make thee to shudder, and grow sick at heart,—  
Go forth, under the open sky, and list  
To Nature's teachings, while from all around—  
Earth and her waters, and the depths of air,—  
Comes a still voice—

Yet a few days, and thee  
The all-beholding sun shall see no more  
In all his course; nor yet in the cold ground,  
Where thy pale form was laid, with many tears, 20  
Nor in the embrace of ocean, shall exist  
Thy image. Earth, that nourished thee, shall claim  
Thy growth, to be resolved to earth again,  
And, lost each human trace, surrendering up  
Thine individual being, shalt thou go  
To mix forever with the elements,  
To be a brother to the insensible rock  
And to the sluggish clod, which the rude swain  
Turns with his share, and treads upon. The oak  
Shall send his roots abroad, and pierce thy mould. 30

Yet not to thine eternal resting-place  
Shalt thou retire alone, nor couldst thou wish  
Couch more magnificent. Thou shalt lie down  
With patriarchs of the infant world, with kings,  
The powerful of the earth, the wise, the good,  
Fair forms, and hoary seers of ages past,  
All in one mighty sepulchre. The hills  
Rock-ribbed and ancient as the sun, the vales  
Stretching in pensive quietness between;  
The venerable woods, rivers that move 40  
In majesty, and the complaining brooks  
That make the meadows green; and, poured round all,  
Old Ocean's gray and melancholy waste,—  
Are but the solemn decorations all  
Of the great tomb of man. The golden sun,  
The planets, all the infinite host of heaven,  
Are shining on the sad abodes of death,

Through the still lapse of ages. All that tread  
The globe are but a handful to the tribes  
That slumber in its bosom.—Take the wings 50  
Of morning, pierce the Barcan<sup>5</sup> wilderness,  
Or lose thyself in the continuous woods  
Where rolls the Oregon, and hears no sound,  
Save his own dashings—yet the dead are there:  
And millions in those solitudes, since first  
The flight of years began, have laid them down  
In their last sleep—the dead reign there alone.  
So shalt thou rest, and what if thou withdraw  
In silence from the living, and no friend  
Take note of thy departure? All that breathe 60  
Will share thy destiny. The gay will laugh  
When thou art gone, the solemn brood of care  
Plod on, and each one as before will chase  
His favorite phantom; yet all these shall leave  
Their mirth and their employments, and shall come  
And make their bed with thee. As the long train  
Of ages glide away, the sons of men,  
The youth in life's green spring, and he who goes  
In the full strength of years, matron and maid,  
The speechless babe, and the gray-headed man— 70  
Shall one by one be gathered to thy side,  
By those, who in their turn shall follow them.

So live, that when thy summons comes to join  
The innumerable caravan, which moves  
To that mysterious realm, where each shall take  
His chamber in the silent halls of death,  
Thou go not, like the quarry-slave at night,  
Scourged to his dungeon, but, sustained and soothed  
By an unfaltering trust, approach thy grave,  
Like one who wraps the drapery of his couch 80  
About him, and lies down to pleasant dreams.  
1811, 1821 1821

<sup>5</sup> Refers to the region of Barca, in northern Africa.

### *The Yellow Violet*

When beechen buds begin to swell,  
And woods the blue-bird's warble know,  
The yellow violet's modest bell  
Peeps from the last year's leaves below.

Ere russet fields their green resume,  
Sweet flower, I love, in forest bare,  
To meet thee, when thy faint perfume  
Alone is in the virgin air.  
Of all her train, the hands of Spring  
First plant thee in the watery mould, 10



And I have seen thee blossoming  
 Beside the snow-bank's edges cold.  
 Thy parent sun, who bade thee view  
 Pale skies, and chilling moisture sip,  
 Has bathed thee in his own bright hue,  
 And streaked with jet thy glowing lip.  
 Yet slight thy form, and low thy seat,  
 And earthward bent thy gentle eye,  
 Unapt the passing view to meet  
 When loftier flowers are flaunting nigh.  
 Oft, in the sunless April day,  
 Thy early smile has stayed my walk;  
 But midst the gorgeous blooms of May,  
 I passed thee on thy humble stalk.  
 So they, who climb to wealth, forget  
 The friends in darker fortunes tried.  
 I copied them—but I regret  
 That I should ape the ways of pride.

And when again the genial hour  
 Awakes the painted tribes of light,<sup>6</sup>  
 I'll not o'erlook the modest flower  
 That made the woods of April bright.

1814

1821

### *Inscription for the Entrance to a Wood*<sup>7</sup>

Stranger, if thou hast learned a truth which needs  
 No school of long experience, that the world  
 Is full of guilt and misery, and hast seen  
 Enough of all its sorrows, crimes, and cares,  
 To tire thee of it, enter this wild wood  
 And view the haunts of Nature. The calm shade  
 Shall bring a kindred calm, and the sweet breeze  
 That makes the green leaves dance, shall waft a balm  
 To thy sick heart. Thou wilt find nothing here  
 Of all that pained thee in the haunts of men,  
 And made thee loathe thy life. The primal curse  
 Fell, it is true, upon the unsinning earth,  
 But not in vengeance. God hath yoked to guilt  
 Her pale tormentor, misery. Hence, these shades  
 Are still the abodes of gladness; the thick roof  
 Of green and stirring branches is alive  
 And musical with birds, that sing and sport

10

<sup>6</sup> One of the worst examples of Bryant's addiction in his earlier poems to the poetic diction of the eighteenth century.

<sup>7</sup> This poem, especially ll. 6-11, should be compared with Wordsworth's "Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey," especially ll. 22-31.

In wantonness of spirit; while below  
 The squirrel, with raised paws and form erect,  
 Chirps merrily. Throngs of insects in the shade  
 Try their thin wings and dance in the warm beam  
 That waked them into life. Even the green trees  
 Partake the deep contentment; as they bend  
 To the soft winds, the sun from the blue sky  
 Looks in and sheds a blessing on the scene.  
 Scarce less the cleft-born wild-flower seems to enjoy  
 Existence, than the winged plunderer  
 That sucks its sweets. The mossy rocks themselves,  
 And the old and ponderous trunks of prostrate trees  
 That lead from knoll to knoll a causey<sup>8</sup> rude  
 Or bridge the sunken brook, and their dark roots,  
 With all their earth upon them, twisting high,  
 Breathe fixed tranquillity. The rivulet  
 Sends forth glad sounds, and tripping o'er its bed  
 Of pebbly sands, or leaping down the rocks,  
 Seems, with continuous laughter, to rejoice  
 In its own being. Softly tread the marge,  
 Lest from her midway perch thou scare the wren  
 That dips her bill in water. The cool wind,  
 That stirs the stream in play, shall come to thee,  
 Like one that loves thee nor will let thee pass  
 Ungreeted, and shall give its light embrace.

1815

1817

### *"I Cannot Forget with What Fervid Devotion"*

I cannot forget with what fervid devotion  
 I worshipped the visions of verse and of fame;  
 Each gaze at the glories of earth, sky, and ocean,  
 To my kindled emotions, was wind over flame.  
 And deep were my musings in life's early blossom,  
 'Mid the twilight of mountain-groves wandering  
 long;  
 How thrilled my young veins, and how throbbed my  
 full bosom,  
 When o'er me descended the spirit of song!  
 'Mong the deep-cloven fells<sup>9</sup> that for ages had  
 listened  
 To the rush of the pebble-paved river between,  
 Where the kingfisher screamed and gray precipice  
 glistened,  
 All breathless with awe have I gazed on the scene;

<sup>8</sup> That is, causeway.

<sup>9</sup> Mountains with deep gorges.

Till I felt the dark power o'er my reveries stealing,  
 From the gloom of the thickets that over me hung,  
 And the thoughts that awoke, in that rapture of  
 feeling,  
 Were formed into verse as they rose to my tongue.  
 Bright visions! I mixed with the world, and ye faded,  
 No longer your pure rural worshipper now;  
 In the haunts your continual presence pervaded,  
 Ye shrink from the signet of care on my brow. 20  
 In the old mossy groves on the breast of the  
 mountain,  
 In deep lonely glens where the waters complain,  
 By the shade of the rock, by the gush of the fountain,  
 I seek your loved footsteps, but seek them in vain.  
 Oh, leave not forlorn and forever forsaken,  
 Your pupil and victim to life and its tears!  
 But sometimes return, and in mercy awaken  
 The glories ye showed to his earlier years.  
 1815 1826

### To a Waterfowl<sup>10</sup>

Whither, midst falling dew,  
 While glow the heavens with the last steps of day,  
 Far, through their rosy depths, dost thou pursue  
 Thy solitary way?  
 Vainly the fowler's<sup>11</sup> eyes  
 Might mark thy distant flight to do thee wrong,  
 As, darkly seen against the crimson sky,  
 Thy figure floats along.  
 Seek'st thou the plashy<sup>12</sup> brink  
 Of weedy lake, or marge of river wide, 10  
 Or where the rocking billows rise and sink  
 On the chafed ocean-side?  
 There is a Power whose care  
 Teaches thy way along that pathless coast—  
 The desert and illimitable air—  
 Lone wandering, but not lost.

<sup>10</sup> The idea for this poem came to Bryant on a December evening in 1815 as he walked, in a "forlorn and desolate" mood, toward Plainfield, Mass., to make inquiries about the opportunities offered there for a young lawyer. The sight of the waterfowl winging its way southward, as if under divine guidance, gave him reassurance, and that night he wrote the poem, which Matthew Arnold and Hartley Coleridge agreed in considering the finest short poem in the English language.

<sup>11</sup> That is, hunter's.

<sup>12</sup> Marshy.

All day thy wings have fanned,  
 At that far height, the cold, thin atmosphere,  
 Yet stoop not, weary, to the welcome land,  
 Though the dark night is near. 20  
 And soon that toil shall end;  
 Soon shalt thou find a summer home, and rest,  
 And scream among thy fellows; reeds shall bend,  
 Soon, o'er thy sheltered nest.  
 Thou'rt gone, the abyss of heaven  
 Hath swallowed up thy form; yet, on my heart  
 Deeply has sunk the lesson thou hast given,  
 And shall not soon depart.  
 He who, from zone to zone,  
 Guides through the boundless sky thy certain  
 flight, 30  
 In the long way that I must tread alone,  
 Will lead my steps aright.  
 1815 1818

### Green River<sup>13</sup>

When breezes are soft and skies are fair,  
 I steal an hour from study and care,  
 And hie me away to the woodland scene,  
 Where wanders the stream with waters of green,  
 As if the bright fringe of herbs on its brink  
 Had given their stain to the wave they drink;  
 And they, whose meadows it murmurs through,  
 Have named the stream from its own fair hue.  
 Yet pure its waters—its shallows are bright  
 With colored pebbles and sparkles of light, 10  
 And clear the depths where its eddies play,  
 And dimples deepen and whirl away,  
 And the plane-tree's speckled arms o'ershoot  
 The swifter current that mines its root,  
 Through whose shifting leaves, as you walk the hill,  
 The quivering glimmer of sun and rill  
 With a sudden flash on the eye is thrown,  
 Like the ray that streams from the diamond-stone.  
 Oh, loveliest there the spring days come,  
 With blossoms, and birds, and wild-bees' hum; 20  
 The flowers of summer are fairest there,

<sup>13</sup> During the years when Bryant gravitated between poetry and the law, he often repaired to the banks of Green River for relaxation, apparently in the mood described in "I Cannot Forget with what Fervid Devotion" and "I Broke the Spell that Held Me Long."

And freshest the breath of the summer air;  
And sweetest the golden autumn day  
In silence and sunshine glides away.

Yet, fair as thou art, thou shunnest to glide,  
Beautiful stream! by the village side;  
But windest away from haunts of men,  
To quiet valley and shaded glen;  
And forest, and meadow, and slope of hill,  
Around thee, are lonely, lovely, and still  
Lonely—save when, by thy rippling tides  
From thicket to thicket the angler glides:  
Or the simpler <sup>14</sup> comes, with basket and book  
For herbs of power on thy banks to look;  
Or haply, some idle dreamer, like me,  
To wander, and muse, and gaze on thee,  
Still—save the chirp of birds that feed  
On the river cherry and seedy reed,  
And thy own wild music gushing out  
With mellow murmur of fairy shout,  
From dawn to the blush of another day,  
Like traveller singing along his way.

That fairy music I never hear,  
Nor gaze on those waters so green and clear,  
And mark them winding away from sight,  
Darkened with shade or flashing with light,  
While o'er them the vine to its thicket clings,  
And the zephyr stoops to freshen his wings,  
But I wish that fate had left me free  
To wander these quiet haunts with thee,  
Till the eating cars of earth should depart,  
And the peace of the scene pass into my heart;  
And I envy thy stream, as it glides along  
Through its beautiful banks in a trance of song.

Though forced to drudge for the dregs of men,  
And scrawl strange words with the barbarous pen,  
And mingle among the jostling crowd,  
Where the sons of strife are subtle and loud—  
I often come to this quiet place,  
To breathe the airs that ruffle thy face,  
And gaze upon thee in silent dream,  
For in thy lonely and lovely stream  
An image of that calm life appears  
That won my heart in my greener years.

1818

1821

<sup>14</sup> Herb-gatherer.

### "Oh Fairest of the Rural Maids" <sup>15</sup>

Oh fairest of the rural maids!  
Thy birth was in the forest shades;  
Green boughs, and glimpses of the sky,  
Were all that met thine infant eye.

Thy sports, thy wanderings, when a child,  
Were ever in the sylvan wild;  
And all the beauty of the place  
Is in thy heart and on thy face.

The twilight of the trees and rocks  
Is in the light shade of thy locks;  
Thy step is as the wind, that weaves  
Its playful way among the leaves.

Thine eyes are springs, in whose serene  
And silent waters heaven is seen;  
Their lashes are the herbs that look  
On their young figures in the brook.

The forest depths, by foot unpressed,  
Are not more sinless than thy breast;  
The holy peace that fills the air  
Of those calm solitudes, is there.

1820

1832

### A Winter Piece <sup>16</sup>

The time has been that these wild solitudes,  
Yet beautiful as wild, were trod by me  
Often than now; and when the ills of life  
Had chafed my spirit—when the unsteady pulse  
Beat with strange flutterings—I would wander forth  
And seek the woods. The sunshine on my path  
Was to me as a friend. The swelling hills,  
The quiet dells retiring far between,  
With gentle invitation to explore  
Their windings, were a calm society  
That talked with me and soothed me. Then the chant  
Of birds, and chime of brooks, and soft caress  
Of the fresh sylvan air, made me forget  
The thoughts that broke my peace, and I began  
To gather simples by the fountain's brink,  
And lose myself in day-dreams. While I stood

<sup>15</sup> Addressed to Frances Fairchild a year before their marriage. The poem suggests Wordsworth's "Three Years She Grew in Sun and Shower."

<sup>16</sup> Although obviously Wordsworthian in tone, this poem, originally entitled "Winter Scenes," is a distinctively New England production, antedating Whittier's "Snow-Bound" by forty-five years.

In Nature's loneliness, I was with one  
 With whom I early grew familiar, one  
 Who never had a frown for me, whose voice  
 Never rebuked me for the hours I stole 20  
 From cares I loved not, but of which the world  
 Deems highest, to converse with her. When shrieked  
 The bleak November winds, and smote the woods,  
 And the brown fields were herbless, and the shades,  
 That met above the merry rivulet,  
 Were spoiled, I sought, I loved them still; they  
 seemed

Like old companions in adversity.  
 Still there was beauty in my walks; the brook,  
 Bordered with sparkling frost-work, was as gay  
 As with its fringe of summer flowers. Afar, 30  
 The village with its spires, the path of streams  
 And dim receding valleys, hid before  
 By interposing trees, lay visible  
 Through the bare grove, and my familiar haunts  
 Seemed new to me. Nor was I slow to come  
 Among them, when the clouds, from their still skirts,  
 Had shaken down on earth the feathery snow,  
 And all was white. The pure keen air abroad,  
 Albeit it breathed no scent of herb, nor heard  
 Love-call of bird nor merry hum of bee, 40  
 Was not the air of death. Bright mosses crept  
 Over the spotted trunks, and the close buds,  
 That lay along the boughs, instinct with life,  
 Patient, and waiting the soft breath of Spring,  
 Feared not the piercing spirit of the North.  
 The snow-bird twittered on the beechen bough,  
 And 'neath the hemlock, whose thick branches bent  
 Beneath its bright cold burden, and kept dry  
 A circle, on the earth, of withered leaves,  
 The partridge found a shelter. Through the snow 50  
 The rabbit sprang away. The lighter track  
 Of fox, and the raccoon's broad path, were there.  
 Crossing each other. From his hollow tree  
 The squirrel was abroad, gathering the nuts  
 Just fallen, that asked the winter cold and sway  
 Of winter blast, to shake them from their hold.

But Winter has yet brighter scenes—he boasts  
 Splendors beyond what gorgeous Summer knows;  
 Or Autumn with his many fruits, and woods  
 All flushed with many hues. Come when the rains 60  
 Have glazed the snow and clothed the trees with ice,  
 While the slant sun of February pours  
 Into the bowers a flood of light. Approach!

The incrusted surface shall upbear thy steps,  
 And the broad arching portals of the grove  
 Welcome thy entering. Look! the massy trunks  
 Are cased in the pure crystal; each light spray,  
 Nodding and tinkling in the breath of heaven,  
 Is studded with its trembling water-drops, 70  
 That glimmer with an amethystine light.  
 But round the parent-stem the long low boughs  
 Bend, in a glittering ring, and arbors hide  
 The glassy floor. Oh! you might deem the spot  
 The spacious cavern of some virgin mine,  
 Deep in the womb of earth—where the gems grow,  
 And diamonds put forth radiant rods and bud  
 With amethyst and topaz—and the place  
 Lit up, most royally, with the pure beam  
 That dwells in them. Or haply the vast hall 80  
 Of fairy palace, that outlasts the night,  
 And fades not in the glory of the sun;—  
 Where crystal columns send forth slender shafts  
 And crossing arches; and fantastic aisles  
 Wind from the sight in brightness, and are lost  
 Among the crowded pillars. Raise thine eye;  
 Thou seest no cavern roof, no palace vault:  
 There the blue sky and the white drifting cloud  
 Look in. Again the wildered fancy dreams  
 Of spouting fountains, frozen as they rose,  
 And fixed, with all their branching jets, in air, 90  
 And all their sluices sealed. All, all is light;  
 Light without shade. But all shall pass away  
 With the next sun. From numberless vast trunks  
 Loosened, the crashing ice shall make a sound  
 Like the far roar of rivers, and the eve  
 Shall close o'er the brown woods as it was wont.

And it is pleasant, when the noisy streams  
 Are just set free, and milder suns melt off  
 The plashy snow, save only the firm drift  
 In the deep glen or the close shade of pines— 100  
 'Tis pleasant to behold the wreaths of smoke  
 Roll up among the maples of the hill,  
 Where the shrill sound of youthful voices wakes  
 The shriller echo, as the clear pure lymph,  
 That from the wounded trees, in twinkling drops,  
 Falls, mid the golden brightness of the morn,  
 Is gathered in with brimming pails, and oft,  
 Wielded by sturdy hands, the stroke of axe  
 Makes the woods ring. Along the quiet air,  
 Come and float calmly off the soft light clouds, 110  
 Such as you see in summer, and the winds

Scarce stir the branches. Lodged in sunny cleft,  
 Where the cold breezes come not, blooms alone  
 The little wind-flower, whose just opened eye  
 Is blue as the spring heaven it gazes at—  
 Startling the loiterer in the naked groves  
 With unexpected beauty, for the time  
 Of blossoms and green leaves is yet afar.  
 And ere it comes, the encountering winds shall oft  
 Muster their wrath again, and rapid clouds 120  
 Shade heaven, and bounding on the frozen earth  
 Shall fall their volleyed stores, rounded like hail  
 And white like snow, and the loud North again  
 Shall buffet the vexed forest in his rage.  
 1820 1825

### *Hymn to Death*<sup>17</sup>

Oh! could I hope the wise and pure in heart  
 Might hear my song without a frown, nor deem  
 My voice unworthy of the theme it tries,—  
 I would take up the hymn to Death, and say  
 To the grim power, The world hath slandered thee  
 And mocked thee. On thy dim and shadowy brow  
 They place an iron crown, and call thee king  
 Of terrors, and the spoiler of the world,  
 Deadly assassin, that strik'st down the fair,  
 The loved, the good—that breathest on the lights 10  
 Of virtue set along the vale of life,  
 And they go out in darkness. I am come,  
 Not with reproaches, not with cries and prayers,  
 Such as have stormed thy stern, insensible ear  
 From the beginning; I am come to speak  
 Thy praises. True it is, that I have wept  
 Thy conquests, and may weep them yet again,  
 And thou from some I love will take a life  
 Dear to me as my own. Yet while the spell  
 Is on my spirit, and I talk with thee 20  
 In sight of all thy trophies, face to face,  
 Meet is it that my voice should utter forth  
 Thy nobler triumphs; I will teach the world  
 To thank thee. Who are thine accusers?—Who?  
 The living!—they who never felt thy power,

<sup>17</sup> Preoccupied as Bryant was during his earlier years with thoughts of death (in "Thanatopsis" and numerous other of his earlier poems), he appears to have shaken off his fears of death under the cheering influence of his happy life with Frances Fairchild in Great Barrington. The first 133 lines were written in this new mood of serenity. Lines 134-168 were added after he received the news of his father's death, the earlier portion being put down as "desultory numbers" written in a mood of "idle revery."

And know thee not. The curses of the wretch  
 Whose crimes are ripe, his sufferings when thy hand  
 Is on him, and the hour he dreads is come,  
 Are writ among thy praises. But the good—  
 Does he whom thy kind hand dismissed to peace, 30  
 Upbraid the gentle violence that took off  
 His fetters, and unbarred his prison-cell?

Raise then the hymn to Death. Deliverer!  
 God hath anointed thee to free the oppressed  
 And crush the oppressor. When the armed chief,  
 The conqueror of nations, walks the world,  
 And it is changed beneath his feet, and all  
 Its kingdoms melt into one mighty realm—  
 Thou, while his head is loftiest and his heart  
 Blasphemes, imagining his own right hand 40  
 Almighty, thou dost set thy sudden grasp  
 Upon him, and the links of that strong chain  
 Which bound mankind are crumbled; thou dost break  
 Sceptre and crown, and beat his throne to dust.  
 Then the earth shouts with gladness, and her tribes  
 Gather within their ancient bounds again.  
 Else had the mighty of the olden time,  
 Nimrod,<sup>18</sup> Sesotris,<sup>19</sup> or the youth who feigned  
 His birth from Libyan Ammon,<sup>20</sup> smitten yet  
 The nations with a rod of iron, and driven 50  
 Their chariot o'er our necks. Thou dost avengé,  
 In thy good time, the wrongs of those who know  
 No other friend. Nor dost thou interpose  
 Only to lay the sufferer asleep,  
 Where he who made him wretched troubles not  
 His rest—thou dost strike down his tyrant too.  
 Oh, there is joy when hands that held the scourge  
 Drop lifeless, and the pitiless heart is cold.  
 Thou too dost purge from earth its horrible  
 And old idolatries;—from the proud fane 60  
 Each to his grave their priests go out, till none  
 Is left to teach their worship; then the fires  
 Of sacrifice are chilled, and the green moss  
 O'ercreeps their altars; the fallen images  
 Cumber the weedy courts, and for loud hymns,  
 Chanted by kneeling multitudes, the wind  
 Shrieks in the solitary aisles. When he  
 Who gives his life to guilt, and laughs at all

<sup>18</sup> Nimrod, a son of Kush, described in Genesis 10:8-10, as a mighty hunter and ruler.

<sup>19</sup> Sesotris, the name given by the Greeks to the great Egyptian king and conqueror; often called Rameses-Sesotris.

<sup>20</sup> An epithet of Zeus as worshipped in Egypt and Libya, identifying him with the Egyptian Amen.

The laws that God or man has made, and round  
 Hedges his scat with power, and shines in  
 wealth,—  
 Lifts up his atheist front to scoff at Heaven,  
 And celebrates his shame in open day,  
 Thou, in the pride of all his crimes, cutt'st off  
 The horrible example. Touched by thine,  
 The extortioner's hard hand foregoes the gold  
 Wrung from the o'er-worn poor. The perjurer,  
 Whose tongue was lithe, e'en now, and voluble  
 Against his neighbor's life, and he who laughed  
 And leaped for joy to see a spotless fame  
 Blasted before his own foul calumnies,  
 Are smit with deadly silence. He, who sold  
 His conscience to preserve a worthless life,  
 Even while he hugs himself on his escape,  
 Trembles, as, doubly terrible, at length,  
 Thy steps o'ertake him, and there is no time  
 For parley, nor will bribes unclench thy grasp.  
 Oft, too, dost thou reform thy victim. long  
 Ere his last hour. And when the reveller,  
 Mad in the chase of pleasure, stretches on,  
 And strains each nerve, and clears the path of life 90  
 Like wind, thou point'st him to the dreadful goal,  
 And shak'st thy hour-glass in his reeling eye,  
 And check'st him in mid course. Thy skeleton hand  
 Shows to the faint of spirit the right path,  
 And he is warned, and fears to step aside.  
 Thou sett'st between the ruffian and his crime  
 Thy ghastly countenance, and his slack hand  
 Drops the drawn knife. But, oh, most fearfully  
 Dost thou show forth Heaven's justice, when thy  
 shafts  
 Drink up the ebbing spirit—then the hard 100  
 Of heart and violent of hand restores  
 The treasure to the friendless wretch he wronged.  
 Then from the writhing bosom thou dost pluck  
 The guilty secret; lips, for ages sealed,  
 Are faithless to their dreadful trust at length,  
 And give it up, the felon's latest breath  
 Absolves the innocent man who bears his crime;  
 The slanderer, horror-smitten, and in tears,  
 Recalls the deadly obloquy he forged  
 To work his brother's ruin. Thou dost make 110  
 Thy penitent victim utter to the air  
 The dark conspiracy that strikes at life,  
 And aims to whelm the laws; ere yet the hour  
 Is come, and the dread sign of murder given.

Thus, from the first of time, hast thou been found  
 On virtue's side; the wicked, but for thee,  
 Had been too strong for the good; the great of earth  
 Had crushed the weak for ever. Schooled in guile  
 For ages, while each passing year had brought  
 Its baneful lesson, they had filled the world 120  
 With their abominations; while its tribes,  
 Trodden to earth, imbruted, and despoiled,  
 Had knelt to them in worship; sacrifice  
 Had smoked on many an altar, temple-roofs  
 Had echoed with the blasphemous prayer and hymn:  
 But thou, the great reformer of the world,  
 80 Tak'st off the sons of violence and fraud  
 In their green pupilage, their lore half learned—  
 Ere guilt had quite o'errun the simple heart  
 God gave them at their birth, and blotted out 130  
 His image. Thou dost mark them flushed with hope,  
 As on the threshold of their vast designs  
 Doubtful and loose they stand, and strik'st them  
 down.

Alas! I little thought that the stern power,  
 Whose fearful praise I sang, would try me thus  
 Before the strain was ended. It must cease—  
 For he is in his grave who taught my youth  
 The art of verse, and in the bud of life  
 Offered me to the Muses. Oh, cut off  
 Untimely! when thy reason in its strength 140  
 Ripened by years of toil and studious search,  
 And watch of Nature's silent lessons, taught  
 Thy hand to practise best the lenient art  
 To which thou gavest thy laborious days,  
 And, last, thy life. And, therefore, when the earth  
 Received thee, tears were in unyielding eyes  
 And on hard cheeks, and they who deemed thy skill  
 Delayed their death-hour, shuddered and turned pale  
 When thou wert gone. This faltering verse, which  
 thou  
 Shalt not, as wont, o'erlook, is all I have 150  
 To offer at thy grave—this—and the hope  
 To copy thy example, and to leave  
 A name of which the wretched shall not think  
 As of an enemy's, whom they forgive  
 As all forgive the dead. Rest, therefore, thou  
 Whose early guidance trained my infant steps—  
 Rest, in the bosom of God, till the brief sleep  
 Of death is over, and a happier life  
 Shall dawn to waken thine insensible dust.

Now thou art not—and yet the men whose  
 guilt 160  
 Has wearied Heaven for vengeance—he who bears  
 False witness—he who takes the orphan's bread,  
 And robs the widow—he who spreads abroad  
 Polluted hands in mockery of prayer,  
 Arc left to cumber earth. Shuddering I look  
 On what is written, yet I blot not out  
 The desultory numbers; let them stand,  
 The record of an idle revery.  
 1820 1825

### *The West Wind*

Beneath the forest's skirt I rest,  
 Whose branching pines rise dark and high,  
 And hear the breezes of the West  
 Among the thread-like foliage sigh.  
 Sweet Zephyr! why that sound of woe?  
 Is not thy home among the flowers?  
 Do not the bright June roses blow,  
 To meet thy kiss at morning hours?  
 And lo! thy glorious realm outspread—  
 Yon stretching valleys, green and gay,  
 And yon free hill-tops, o'er whose head  
 The loose white clouds are borne away.  
 And there the full broad river runs,  
 And many a fount wells fresh and sweet,  
 To cool thee when the mid-day suns  
 Have made thee faint beneath their heat.  
 Thou wind of joy, and youth, and love;  
 Spirit of the new-wakened year!  
 The sun in his blue realm above  
 Smooths a bright path when thou art here. 20  
 In lawns the murmuring bee is heard,  
 The wooing ring-dove in the shade;  
 On thy soft breath, the new-fledged bird  
 Takes wing, half happy, half afraid.  
 Ah! thou art like our wayward race;—  
 When not a shade of pain or ill  
 Dims the bright smile of Nature's face,  
 Thou lov'st to sigh and murmur still.  
 1821 1822

### *The Indian Girl's Lament*

An Indian girl was sitting where  
 Her lover, slain in battle, slept;  
 Her maiden veil, her own black hair,  
 Came down o'er eyes that wept;  
 And wildly, in her woodland tongue,  
 This sad and simple lay she sung;  
 "I've pulled away the shrubs that grew  
 Too close above thy sleeping head,  
 And broke the forest-boughs that threw  
 Their shadows o'er thy bed, 10  
 That, shining from the sweet southwest,  
 The sunbeams might rejoice thy rest.  
 "It was a weary, weary road  
 That led thee to the pleasant coast,  
 Where thou, in his serene abode,  
 Hast met thy father's ghost;  
 Where everlasting autumn lies  
 On yellow woods and sunny skies.  
 "'Twas I the brodered mocsen made,  
 That shod thee for that distant land; 20  
 'Twas I thy bow and arrows laid  
 Beside thy still cold hand;  
 Thy bow in many a battle bent,  
 Thy arrows never vainly sent.  
 "With wampum-belts I crossed thy breast,  
 And wrapped thee in the bison's hide,  
 And laid the food that pleased thee best,  
 In plenty, by thy side,  
 And decked thee bravely, as became  
 A warrior of illustrious name. 30  
 "Thou'rt happy now, for thou hast passed  
 The long dark journey of the grave,  
 And in the land of light, at last,  
 Hast joined the good and brave;  
 Amid the flushed and balmy air,  
 The bravest and the loveliest there.  
 "Yet, oft to thine own Indian maid  
 Even there thy thoughts will earthward stray—  
 To her who sits where thou wert laid,  
 And weeps the hours away, 40  
 Yet almost can her grief forget,  
 To think that thou dost love her yet.  
 "And thou, by one of those still lakes  
 That in a shining cluster lie,

On which the south wind scarcely breaks  
 The image of the sky,  
 A bower for thee and me hast made  
 Beneath the many-colored shade.

"And thou dost wait and watch to meet  
 My spirit sent to join the blessed,  
 And, wondering what detains my feet  
 From that bright land of rest,  
 Dost seem, in every sound, to hear  
 The rustling of my footsteps near."

1823

1826

*"I Broke the Spell That Held Me Long"*

I broke the spell that held me long,  
 The dear, dear witchery of song.  
 I said, the poet's idle lore  
 Shall waste my prime of years no more,  
 For Poetry, though heavenly born,  
 Consorts with poverty and scorn.

I broke the spell—nor deemed its power  
 Could fetter me another hour.  
 Ah, thoughtless! how could I forget  
 Its causes were around me yet?  
 For wheresoe'er I looked, the while,  
 Was Nature's everlasting smile.

Still came and lingered on my sight  
 Of flowers and streams the bloom and light,  
 And glory of the stars and sun;  
 And these and poetry are one.  
 They, ere the world had held me long,  
 Recalled me to the love of song.

1824

1824

*An Indian at the Burial-Place of His Father*<sup>21</sup>

It is the spot I came to seek—  
 My father's ancient burial-place,  
 Ere from these vales, ashamed and weak,  
 Withdrew our wasted race.  
 It is the spot—I know it well—  
 Of which our old traditions tell.

For here the upland bank sends out  
 A ridge toward the riverside;

<sup>21</sup> Bryant shared with Freneau, Cooper, Irving, Longfellow, and others a romantic interest in the American Indian, his "Monument Mountain," "The Indian Girl's Lament," and "The Prairies" all being motivated by this same interest.

I know the shaggy hills about,  
 The meadows smooth and wide,  
 The plains, that, toward the southern sky,  
 Fenced east and west by mountains lie.

10

A white man, gazing on the scene,  
 Would say a lovely spot was here,  
 And praise the lawns, so fresh and green,  
 Between the hills so sheer.  
 I like it not—I would the plain  
 Lay in its tall old groves again.

The sheep are on the slopes around,  
 The cattle in the meadows feed,  
 And laborers turn the crumbling ground,  
 Or drop the yellow seed,  
 And prancing steeds, in trappings gay,  
 Whirl the bright chariot o'er the way.

20

Methinks it were a nobler sight  
 To see these vales in woods arrayed,  
 Their summits in the golden light,  
 Their trunks in grateful shade,  
 And herds of deer that bounding go  
 O'er hills and prostrate trees below.

30

And then to mark the lord of all,  
 The forest hero, trained to wars,  
 Quivered and plumed, and lithe and tall,  
 And seamed with glorious scars,  
 Walk forth, amid his reign, to dare  
 The wolf, and grapple with the bear.

This bank, in which the dead were laid,  
 Was sacred when its soil was ours;  
 Hither the silent Indian maid  
 Brought wreaths of beads and flowers,  
 And the gray chief and gifted seer  
 Worshipped the god of thunders here.

40

But now the wheat is green and high  
 On clods that hid the warrior's breast,  
 And scattered in the furrows lie  
 The weapons of his rest;  
 And there, in the loose sand, is thrown  
 Of his large arm the mouldering bone.

Ah, little thought the strong and brave  
 Who bore their lifeless chieftain forth—  
 Or the young wife that weeping gave  
 Her first-born to the earth,

50



That the pale race who waste us now  
Among their bones should guide the plough.

They waste us—ay—like April snow  
In the warm noon, we shrink away;

And fast they follow, as we go

Toward the setting day—

Till they shall fill the land, and we

Are driven into the Western sea.

But I behold a fearful sign,

To which the white men's eyes are blind;

Their race may vanish hence, like mine,

And leave no trace behind,

Save ruins o'er the region spread,

And the white stones above the dead.

Before these fields were shorn and tilled,

Full to the brim our rivers flowed;

The melody of waters filled

The fresh and boundless wood;

And torrents dashed and rivulets played,

And fountains spouted in the shade.

Those grateful sounds are heard no more,

The springs are silent in the sun;

The rivers, by the blackened shore,

With lessening current run;

The realm our tribes are crushed to get

May be a barren desert yet.

1824

### *Monument Mountain*<sup>22</sup>

Thou who wouldst see the lovely and the wild  
Mingled in harmony on Nature's face,  
Ascend our rocky mountains. Let thy foot  
Fail not with weariness, for on their tops  
The beauty and the majesty of earth,  
Spread wide beneath, shall make thee to forget  
The steep and toilsome way. There, as thou stand'st.  
The haunts of men below thee, and around  
The mountain-summits, thy expanding heart  
Shall feel a kindred with that loftier world  
To which thou art translated, and partake  
The enlargement of thy vision. Thou shalt look  
Upon the green and rolling forest-tops,  
And down into the secrets of the glens,  
And streams that with their bordering thickets strive

10

<sup>22</sup> Bryant based this poem on a legend current at Great Barrington.

To hide their windings. Thou shalt gaze, at once,  
Here on white villages, and tith, and herds,  
And swarming roads, and there on solitudes  
That only hear the torrent, and the wind,  
And eagle's shriek. There is a precipice  
That seems a fragment of some mighty wall,  
Built by the hand that fashioned the old world,  
To separate its nations, and thrown down  
When the flood drowned them. To the north, a path  
Conducts you up the narrow battlement.  
Steep is the western side, shaggy and wild  
With mossy trees, and pinnacles of flint,  
And many a hanging crag. But, to the east,  
Steeper to the vale go down the bare old cliffs—  
Huge pillars, that in middle heaven upbear  
Their weather-beaten capitals, here dark  
With moss, the growth of centuries, and there  
Of chalky whiteness where the thunderbolt  
Has splintered them. It is a fearful thing  
To stand upon the beetling verge,<sup>23</sup> and see  
Where storm and lightning, from that huge gray wall,  
Have tumbled down vast blocks, and at the base  
Dashed them in fragments, and to lay thine ear  
Over the dizzy depth, and hear the sound  
Of winds, that struggle with the woods below,  
Come up like ocean murmurs. But the scene  
Is lovely round; a beautiful river there  
Wanders amid the fresh and fertile meads,  
The paradise he made unto himself,  
Mining the soil for ages. On each side  
The fields swell upward to the hills; beyond,  
Above the hills, in the blue distance, rise  
The mountain-columns with which earth props  
heaven.

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70

40

There is a tale about these reverend rocks,  
A sad tradition of unhappy love,  
And sorrows borne and ended, long ago,  
When over these fair vales the savage sought  
His game in the thick woods. There was a maid,  
The fairest of the Indian maids, bright-eyed,  
With wealth of raven tresses, a light form,  
And a gay heart. About her cabin-door  
The wide old woods resounded with her song  
And fairy laughter all the summer day.  
She loved her cousin; such a love was deemed,  
By the morality of those stern tribes,  
Incestuous, and she struggled hard and long

50

60

<sup>23</sup> That is, overhanging cliff.

Against her love, and reasoned with her heart,  
 As simple Indian maiden might. In vain.  
 Then her eye lost its lustre, and her step  
 Its lightness, and the gray-haired men that passed  
 Her dwelling, wondered that they heard no more  
 The accustomed song and laugh of her, whose looks  
 Were like the cheerful smile of Spring, they said,  
 Upon the Winter of their age. She went  
 To weep where no eye saw, and was not found 70  
 When all the merry girls were met to dance,  
 And all the hunters of the tribe were out;  
 Nor when they gathered from the rustling husk  
 The shining ear; nor when, by the river's side,  
 They pulled the grape and startled the wild shades  
 With sounds of mirth. The keen-eyed Indian dames  
 Would whisper to each other, as they saw  
 Her wasting form, and say, *The girl will die.*

One day into the bosom of a friend,  
 A playmate of her young and innocent years, 80  
 She poured her griefs. "Thou know'st, and thou  
 alone,"

She said, "for I have told thee, all my love,  
 And guilt, and sorrow. I am sick of life.  
 All night I weep in darkness, and the morn  
 Glares on me, as upon a thing accursed,  
 That has no business on the earth. I hate  
 The pastimes and the pleasant toils that once  
 I loved; the cheerful voices of my friends  
 Sound in my ear like mockings, and, at night,  
 In dreams, my mother, from the land of souls, 90  
 Calls me and chides me. All that look on me  
 Do seem to know my shame; I cannot bear  
 Their eyes; I cannot from my heart root out  
 The love that wrings it so, and I must die."

It was a summer morning, and they went  
 To this old precipice. About the cliffs  
 Lay garlands, ears of maize,<sup>24</sup> and shaggy skins  
 Of wolf and bear, the offerings of the tribe  
 Here made to the Great Spirit, for they deemed,  
 Like worshippers of the elder time, that God 100  
 Doth walk on the high places and affect  
 The earth-o'erlooking mountains. She had on  
 The ornaments with which her father loved  
 To deck the beauty of his bright-eyed girl.  
 And bade her wear when stranger warriors came  
 To be his guests. Here the friends sat them down.  
 And sang, all day, old songs of love and death,

<sup>24</sup> Ears of Indian corn.

And decked the poor wan victim's hair with flowers,  
 And prayed that safe and swift might be her way  
 To the calm world of sunshine, where no grief 110  
 Makes the heart heavy and the eyelids red.  
 Beautiful lay the region of her tribe  
 Below her—waters resting in the embrace  
 Of the wide forest, and maize-planted glades  
 Opening amid the leafy wilderness.  
 She gazed upon it long, and at the sight  
 Of her own village peeping through the trees,  
 And her own dwelling, and the cabin-roof  
 Of him she loved with an unlawful love,  
 And came to die for, a warm gush of tears 120  
 Ran from her eyes. But when the sun grew low  
 And the hill shadows long, she threw herself  
 From the steep rock and perished. There was scooped,  
 Upon the mountain's southern slope, a grave;  
 And there they laid her, in the very garb  
 With which the maiden decked herself for death,  
 With the same withering wild-flowers in her hair.  
 And o'er the mould that covered her, the tribe  
 Built up a simple monument, a cone  
 Of small loose stones. Thenceforward all who  
 passed, 130  
 Hunter, and dame, and virgin, laid a stone  
 In silence on the pile. It stands there yet.  
 And Indians from the distant West,<sup>25</sup> who come  
 To visit where their fathers' bones are laid,  
 Yet tell the sorrowful tale, and to this day  
 The mountain where the hapless maiden died  
 Is called the Mountain of the Monument.  
 1824 1824

### *The Murdered Traveller*

When Spring, to woods and wastes around,  
 Brought bloom and joy again,  
 The murdered traveller's bones were found,  
 Far down a narrow glen.

The fragrant birch, above him, hung  
 Her tassels in the sky;  
 And many a vernal blossom sprung,  
 And nodded careless by.

The redbird warbled, as he wrought  
 His hanging nest o'er head, 10  
 And fearless, near the fatal spot,  
 Her young the partridge led.

<sup>25</sup> The Indians of New York and New England retreated westward to Michigan and northward to Canada.

But there was weeping far away,  
And gentle eyes, for him,  
With watching many an anxious day,  
Were sorrowful and dim.

They little knew, who loved him so,  
The fearful death he met,  
When shouting o'er the desert snow,  
Unarmed, and hard beset;—

Nor how, when round the frosty pole  
The northern dawn was red,  
The mountain wolf and wildcat stole  
To banquet on the dead;—

Nor how, when strangers found his bones,  
They dressed the hasty bier,  
And marked his grave with nameless stones,  
Unmoistened by a tear.

But long they looked, and feared, and wept,  
Within his distant home;  
And dreamed, and started as they slept,  
For joy that he was come.

Long, long they looked—but never spied  
His welcome step again,  
Nor knew the fearful death he died  
Far down that narrow glen.

1824

1825

### *Mutation*

They talk of short-lived pleasure—be it so—  
Pain dies as quickly: stern, hard-featured Pain  
Expires, and lets her weary prisoner go.

The fiercest agonies have shortest reign;  
And after dreams of horror, comes again  
The welcome morning with its rays of peace.

Oblivion, softly wiping out the stain,  
Makes the strong secret pangs of shame to cease:  
Remorse is virtue's root; its fair increase

Are fruits of innocence and blessedness: 10  
Thus joy, o'erborne and bound, doth still release  
His young limbs from the chains that round him  
press.

Weep not that the world changes—did it keep  
A stable, changeless state, 'twere cause indeed to  
weep.

1824

1824

### *November*

Yet one smile more, departing, distant sun!

One mellow smile through the soft vapory air,  
Ere, o'er the frozen earth, the loud winds run,  
Or snows are sifted o'er the meadows bare.

One smile on the brown hills and naked trees,  
And the dark rocks whose summer wreaths are cast, 20  
And the blue gentian-flower, that, in the breeze,  
Nods lonely, of her beauteous race the last.

Yet a few sunny days, in which the bee  
Shall murmur by the hedge that skirts the way, 10  
The cricket chirp upon the russet lea,  
And man delight to linger in thy ray.

Yet one rich smile, and we will try to bear  
The piercing winter frost, and winds, and darkened  
air.

1824

1824

### *A Forest Hymn*<sup>26</sup>

30

The groves were God's first temples. Ere man  
learned

To hew the shaft,<sup>27</sup> and lay the architrave,<sup>28</sup>  
And spread the roof above them—ere he framed  
The lofty vault, to gather and roll back  
The sound of anthems; in the darkling wood,  
Amid the cool and silence, he knelt down,  
And offered to the Mightiest solemn thanks  
And supplication. For his simple heart  
Might not resist the sacred influences

Which, from the stilly twilight of the place, 10  
And from the gray old trunks that high in heaven  
Mingled their mossy boughs, and from the sound  
Of the invisible breath that swayed at once  
All their green tops, stole over him, and bowed  
His spirit with the thought of boundless power  
And inaccessible majesty. Ah, why  
Should we, in the world's riper years, neglect

<sup>26</sup> This is the last poem written by Bryant at Great Barrington before moving to New York City. It illustrates Bryant's relation to nature. For details, see Norman Foerster's *Nature in American Literature* (New York, 1923), chap. I.

When, some years later, Bryant tried to revise passages in the poem that had been criticized, he found that in the revision he had "marred the unity and effect of the poem as a whole," and therefore declared (in conformity with the ideas expressed in his poem on "The Poet"), "The truth is, that an alteration ought never to be made without the mind being filled with the subject. In mending a faulty passage in cold blood, we often do more mischief, by attending to particulars and neglecting the entire construction and sequence of ideas, than we do good."

<sup>27</sup> Column.

<sup>28</sup> The lintel lying between the capital and the frieze.

God's ancient sanctuaries, and adore  
 Only among the crowd, and under roofs  
 That our frail hands have raised? Let me, at least, 20  
 Here, in the shadow of this aged wood,  
 Offer one hymn—thrice happy, if it find  
 Acceptance in His ear.

Father, thy hand  
 Hath reared these venerable columns, thou  
 Didst weave this verdant roof. Thou didst look down  
 Upon the naked earth, and, forthwith, rose  
 All these fair ranks of trees. They, in thy sun,  
 Budded, and shook their green leaves in thy breeze,  
 And shot toward heaven. The century-living crow  
 Whose birth was in their tops, grew old and died 30  
 Among their branches, till, at last, they stood,  
 As now they stand, massy, and tall, and dark,  
 Fit shrine for humble worshipper to hold  
 Communion with his Maker. These dim vaults,  
 These winding aisles, of human pomp or pride  
 Report not. No fantastic carvings show  
 The boast of our vain race to change the form  
 Of thy fair works. But thou art here—thou fill'st  
 The solitude. Thou art in the soft winds  
 That run along the summit of these trees 40  
 In music; thou art in the cooler breath  
 That from the inmost darkness of the place  
 Comes, scarcely felt; the barky trunks, the ground,  
 The fresh moist ground, are all instinct with thee.  
 Here is continual worship;—Nature, here,  
 In the tranquillity that thou dost love,  
 Enjoys thy presence. Noiselessly, around,  
 From perch to perch, the solitary bird  
 Passes; and yon clear spring, that, midst its herbs,  
 Wells softly forth and wandering steeples the roots 50  
 Of half the mighty forest, tells no tale  
 Of all the good it does. Thou hast not left  
 Thyself without a witness, in these shades,  
 Of thy perfections. Grandeur, strength, and grace  
 Are here to speak of thee. This mighty oak—  
 By whose immovable stem I stand and seem  
 Almost annihilated—not a prince,  
 In all that proud old world beyond the deep,  
 E'er wore his crown as loftily as he  
 Wears the green coronal of leaves with which 60  
 Thy hand has graced him. Nestled at his root  
 Is beauty, such as blooms not in the glare  
 Of the broad sun. That delicate forest flower,  
 With scented breath and look so like a smile,

Seems, as it issues from the shapeless mould,  
 An emanation of the indwelling Life,  
 A visible token of the upholding Love,  
 That are the soul of this great universe.

My heart is awed within me when I think  
 Of the great miracle that still goes on, 70  
 In silence, round me—the perpetual work  
 Of thy creation, finished, yet renewed  
 Forever. Written on thy works I read  
 The lesson of thy own eternity.  
 Lo! all grow old and die—but see again,  
 How on the faltering footsteps of decay  
 Youth presses—ever-gave and beautiful youth  
 In all its beautiful forms. These lofty trees  
 Wave not less proudly that their ancestors 80  
 Moulder beneath them. Oh, there is not lost  
 One of earth's charms: upon her bosom yet,  
 After the flight of untold centuries,  
 The freshness of her far beginning lies  
 And yet shall lie. Life mocks the idle hate  
 Of his arch-enemy Death—yea, seats himself  
 Upon the tyrant's throne—the sepulchre,  
 And of the triumphs of his ghastly foe  
 Makes his own nourishment. For he came forth  
 From thine own bosom, and shall have no end.

There have been holy men who hid themselves 90  
 Deep in the woody wilderness, and gave  
 Their lives to thought and prayer, till they outlived  
 The generation born with them, nor seemed  
 Less aged than the hoary trees and rocks  
 Around them;—and there have been holy men  
 Who deemed it were not well to pass life thus.  
 But let me often to these solitudes  
 Retire, and in thy presence reassure  
 My feeble virtue. Here its enemies,  
 The passions, at thy plainer footsteps shrink 100  
 And tremble and are still. O God! when thou  
 Dost scare the world with tempests, set on fire  
 The heavens with falling thunderbolts, or fill,  
 With all the waters of the firmament,  
 The swift dark whirlwind that uproots the woods  
 And drowns the villages; when, at thy call,  
 Uprises the great deep and throws himself  
 Upon the continent, and overwhelms  
 Its cities—who forgets not, at the sight  
 Of these tremendous tokens of thy power, 110  
 His pride, and lays his strifes and follies by?  
 Oh, from these sterner aspects of thy face

Spare me and mine, nor let us need the wrath  
Of the mad, unchained elements to teach  
Who rules them. Be it ours to meditate,  
In these calm shades, thy milder majesty,  
And to the beautiful order of thy works  
Learn to conform the order of our lives.

1825

1825

*Lines on Revisiting the Country*<sup>29</sup>

I stand upon my native hills again,  
Broad, round, and green, that in the summer sky  
With garniture of waving grass and grain,  
Orchards, and beechen forests, basking lie,  
While deep the sunless glens are scooped between,  
Where brawl o'er shallow beds the streams unseen.

A lisping voice and glancing eyes are near,  
And ever-restless feet of one, who, now,  
Gathers the blossoms of her fourth bright year;  
There plays a gladness o'er her fair young brow 10  
As breaks the varied scene upon her sight,  
Upheaved and spread in verdure and in light.

For I have taught her, with delighted eye,  
To gaze upon the mountains—to behold,  
With deep affection, the pure ample sky  
And clouds along its blue abysses rolled,  
To love the song of waters, and to hear  
The melody of winds with charmed ear.

Here have I 'scaped the city's stifling heat,  
Its horrid sounds, and its polluted air, 20  
And, where the season's milder fervors beat,  
And gales, that sweep the forest borders, bear  
The song of bird and sound of running stream,  
Am come awhile to wander and to dream.

Ay, flame thy fiercest, sun! thou canst not wake,  
In this pure air, the plague that walks unseen.  
The maize-leaf and the maple-bough but take,  
From thy strong heats, a deeper, glossier green.  
The mountain wind, that faints not in thy ray,  
Sweeps the blue steams of pestilence away. 30

The mountain wind! most spiritual thing of all  
The wide earth knows; when, in the sultry time,

<sup>29</sup> Written during a summer vacation spent at Great Barrington, after Bryant had gone to live in New York. Lines 7-18 refer to his daughter Frances, born in Great Barrington. Her introduction to external nature (as Professor Tremaine McDowell has observed), although recorded in Wordsworthian terms, was actuated by Bryant's devotion to the Berkshires.

He stoops him from his vast cerulean hall,  
He seems the breath of a celestial clime!  
As if from heaven's wide-open gates did flow  
Health and refreshment on the world below.

1825

1825

*The African Chief*<sup>30</sup>

Chained in the market-place he stood,  
A man of giant frame,  
Amid the gathering multitude  
That shrunk to hear his name—  
All stern of look and strong of limb,  
His dark eye on the ground:—  
And silently they gazed on him  
As on a lion bound.

Vainly, but well, that chief had fought,  
He was a captive now, 10  
Yet pride, that fortune humbles not,  
Was written on his brow.  
The scars his dark broad bosom wore  
Showed warrior true and brave;  
A prince among his tribe before,  
He could not be a slave.

Then to his conqueror he spake:  
"My brother is a king;  
Undo this necklace from my neck,  
And take this bracelet ring, 20  
And send me where my brother reigns,  
And I will fill thy hands  
With store of ivory from the plains,  
And gold-dust from the sands."

"Not for thy ivory nor thy gold  
Will I unbind thy chain;  
That bloody hand shall never hold  
The battle-spear again.  
A price thy nation never gave  
Shall yet be paid for thee; 30  
For thou shalt be the Christian's slave,  
In lands beyond the sea."

<sup>30</sup> Concerning this poem, properly regarded as one of the numerous romantic productions glorifying the noble wild savage, Bryant left the following note: "The story of the African chief, related in this ballad, may be found in the 'African Repository' for April, 1825. The subject of it was a warrior of majestic stature, the brother of Yarradee, king of the Solima nation. He had been taken in battle, and was brought in chains for sale to the Rio Pongas, where he was exhibited in the market-place, his ankles still adorned with massy rings of gold which he wore when captured. The refusal of his captors to listen to his offers of ransom drove him mad, and he died a maniac."

Then wept the warrior chief, and bade  
 To shred his locks away;  
 And one by one, each heavy braid  
 Before the victor lay.

Thick were the platted locks, and long,  
 And closely hidden there  
 Shone many a wedge of gold among  
 The dark and crispèd hair.

“Look, feast thy greedy eye with gold  
 Long kept for sorest need:  
 Take it—thou askest sums untold—  
 And say that I am freed.  
 Take it—my wife, the long, long day,  
 Weeps by the cocoa-tree,  
 And my young children leave their play,  
 And ask in vain for me.”

“I take thy gold, but I have made  
 Thy fetters fast and strong,  
 And ween that by the cocoa-shade  
 Thy wife will wait thee long.”  
 Strong was the agony that shook  
 The captive’s frame to hear,  
 And the proud meaning of his look  
 Was changed to mortal fear.

His heart was broken—crazed his brain:  
 At once his eye grew wild;  
 He struggled fiercely with his chain.  
 Whispered, and wept, and smiled;  
 Yet wore not long those fatal bands,  
 And once, at shut of day,  
 They drew him forth upon the sands,  
 The foul hyena’s prey.

1825

1826

### *The Death of the Flowers*<sup>31</sup>

The melancholy days have come, the saddest of the  
 year,  
 Of wailing winds, and naked woods, and meadows  
 brown and sere;  
 Heaped in the hollows of the grove, the autumn  
 leaves lie dead;  
 They rustle to the eddying gust, and to the rabbit’s  
 tread;

The robin and the wren are flown, and from the  
 shrubs the jay,  
 And from the wood-top calls the crow through all the  
 gloomy day.

Where are the flowers, the fair young flowers, that  
 lately sprang and stood  
 In brighter light and softer airs, a beauteous sister-  
 hood?

40

Alas! they all are in their graves, the gentle race of  
 flowers

Are lying in their lowly beds, with the fair and  
 good of ours.

10

The rain is falling where they lie, but the cold  
 November rain

Calls not from out the gloomy earth the lovely ones  
 again.

The wind-flowers and the violet, they perished  
 long ago,

50

And the brier-rose and the orchis died amid the  
 summer glow;

But on the hill the golden-rod, and the aster in the  
 wood,

And the yellow sunflower by the brook in autumn  
 beauty stood,

Till fell the frost from the clear cold heaven, as  
 falls the plague on men,

And the brightness of their smile was gone, from  
 upland, glade, and glen.

60

And now, when comes the calm mild day, as still  
 such days will come,

To call the squirrel and the bee from out their  
 winter home;

20

When the sound of dropping nuts is heard,  
 though all the trees are still,

And twinkle in the smoky light the waters of the rill,  
 The south wind searches for the flowers whose  
 fragrance late he bore,

And sighs to find them in the wood and by the  
 stream no more.

And then I think of one who in her youthful beauty  
 died,

The fair meek blossom that grew up and faded by  
 my side.

In the cold moist earth we laid her, when the forests  
 cast the leaf,

And we wept that one so lovely should have a life  
 so brief:

<sup>31</sup> Written in memory of Bryant’s favorite sister, Mrs. Sarah Bryant Shaw, who died in 1824.

Yet not unmeet it was that one, like that young  
friend of ours,  
So gentle and so beautiful, should perish with  
the flowers.

1825

1825

*The Past*<sup>32</sup>

Thou unrelenting Past!  
Strong are the barriers round thy dark domain,  
And fetters, sure and fast,  
Hold all that enter thy unbreathing reign.

Far in thy realm withdrawn  
Old empires sit in sullenness and gloom,  
And glorious ages gone  
Lie deep within the shadow of thy womb.

Childhood, with all its mirth,  
Youth, Manhood, Age that draws us to the  
ground,  
And last, Man's Life on earth,  
Glide to thy dim dominions, and are bound.

Thou hast my better years;  
Thou hast my earlier friends, the good, the kind,  
Yielded to thee with tears—  
The venerable form,<sup>33</sup> the exalted mind.

My spirit yearns to bring  
The lost ones back—yearns with desire intense,  
And struggles hard to wring  
Thy bolts apart, and pluck thy captives thence. 20

In vain; thy gates deny  
All passage save to those who hence depart;  
Nor to the streaming eye  
Thou giv'st them back—nor to the broken heart.

In thy abysses hide  
Beauty and excellence unknown; to thee  
Earth's wonder and her pride  
Are gathered, as the waters to the sea;

Labors of good to man,  
Unpublished charity, unbroken faith, 30  
Love, that midst grief began,  
And grew with years, and faltered not in death.

<sup>32</sup> Bryant persisted in regarding this his best poem, preferring it even to "Thanatopsis."

<sup>33</sup> A reference to Bryant's father, Dr. Peter Bryant.

<sup>34</sup> A reference to Bryant's sister, Mrs. Sarah Bryant Shaw, who died in 1824.

<sup>35</sup> Although John Burroughs insisted that the fringed gentian

Full many a mighty name  
Lurks in thy depths, unuttered, unrevered;  
With thee are silent fame,  
Forgotten arts, and wisdom disappeared. 30

Thine for a space are they—  
Yet shalt thou yield thy treasures up at last:  
Thy gates shall yet give way,  
Thy bolts shall fall, inexorable Past! 40

All that of good and fair  
Has gone into thy womb from earliest time,  
Shall then come forth to wear  
The glory and the beauty of its prime.

They have not perished—no!  
Kind words, remembered voices once so sweet,  
Smiles, radiant long ago,  
And features, the great soul's apparent seat.

All shall come back; each tie  
Of pure affection shall be knit again; 50  
Alone shall Evil die,  
And Sorrow dwell a prisoner in thy reign.

And then shall I behold  
Him, by whose kind paternal side I sprung,  
And her, who, still and cold,  
Fills the next grave—the beautiful and young.<sup>34</sup>  
1828 1828

*To the Fringed Gentian*<sup>35</sup>

Thou blossom bright with autumn dew  
And colored with the heaven's own blue,  
That openest when the quiet light  
Succeeds the keen and frosty night—

Thou comest not when violents lean  
O'er wandering brooks and springs unseen,  
Or columbines, in purple dressed,  
Nod o'er the ground-bird's<sup>36</sup> hidden nest.

Thou waitest late and com'st alone,  
When woods are bare and birds are flown, 10  
And frosts and shortening days portend  
The aged year is near his end.

does not come late and alone "when woods are bare," but rather early in the autumn along with many other flowers, the fringed gentian appears in the hills of western Massachusetts precisely as Bryant says. A comparison of the language and construction of this poem with those of the earlier poem on "The Yellow Violet" is revelatory.

<sup>36</sup> A ground bird is any of several thrush-like birds.

Then doth thy sweet and quiet eye  
Look through its fringes to the sky,  
Blue—blue—as if that sky let fall  
A flower from its cerulean wall.

I would that thus, when I shall see  
The hour of death draw near to me,  
Hope, blossoming within my heart,  
May look to heaven as I depart.  
1829

1832

### *Song of Marion's Men \**

Our band is few but true and tried,  
Our leader frank and bold;  
The British soldier trembles<sup>37</sup>  
When Marion's name is told.  
Our fortress is the good greenwood,  
Our tent the cypress-tree;  
We know the forest round us,  
As seamen know the sea.  
We know its walls of thorny vines,  
Its glades of reedy grass,  
Its safe and silent islands  
Within the dark morass.

10

Woe to the English soldiery  
That little dread us near!  
On them shall light at midnight  
A strange and sudden fear:  
When, waking to their tents on fire,  
They grasp their arms in vain,  
And they who stand to face us  
Are beat to earth again;  
And they who fly in terror deem  
A mighty host behind,  
And hear the tramp of thousands  
Upon the hollow wind.

20

\* The exploits of General Francis Marion, the famous partisan warrior of South Carolina, form an interesting chapter in the annals of the American Revolution. The British troops were so harassed by the irregular and successful warfare which he kept up at the head of a few daring followers, that they sent an officer to remonstrate with him for not coming into the open field and fighting "like a gentleman and a Christian."

<sup>37</sup> When, in 1832, Irving undertook to sponsor an English edition of Bryant's poems, the publisher asked Irving to make the poem less offensive to English readers. Irving accordingly authorized the change from "The British soldier trembles" to "The foe man trembles in his camp." Both Irving, who believed that he was acting for the best interests of author and publisher,

Then sweet the hour that brings release  
From danger and from toil:  
We talk the battle over,  
And share the battle's spoil.  
The woodland rings with laugh and shout,  
As if a hunt were up,  
And woodland flowers are gathered  
To crown the soldier's cup.  
With merry songs we mock the wind  
That in the pine-top grieves,  
And slumber long and sweetly  
On beds of oaken leaves.

30

Well knows the fair and friendly moon  
The band that Marion leads—  
The glitter of their rifles,  
The scampering of their steeds.  
'Tis life to guide the fiery barb  
Across the moonlit plain:  
'Tis life to feel the night-wind  
That lifts his tossing mane.  
A moment in the British camp—  
A moment—and away  
Back to the pathless forest,  
Before the peep of day.

40

Grave men there are by broad Santee,  
Grave men with hoary hairs;  
Their hearts are all with Marion,  
For Marion are their prayers.  
And lovely ladies greet our band  
With kindest welcoming,  
With smiles like those of summer,  
And tears like those of spring.  
For them we wear these trusty arms,  
And lay them down no more  
Till we have driven the Briton,  
Forever, from our shore.

50

1831

1831

### *The Prairies*<sup>38</sup>

These are the gardens of the Desert, these  
The unshorn fields, boundless and beautiful,

and Bryant, who knew nothing of the change, were severely attacked for "cowardly subservience" to British opinion. As late as 1932 the incident was characterized as an "outrageous" case of "kow-towing to English influence."

<sup>38</sup> Inspired by Bryant's first view of the West, on a visit to his brothers in Illinois in 1832.



For which the speech of England has no name<sup>39</sup>—  
 The Prairies. I behold them for the first,  
 And my heart swells, while the dilated sight  
 Takes in the encircling vastness. Lo! they stretch  
 In airy undulations, far away,  
 As if the Ocean, in his gentlest swell,  
 Stood still, with all his rounded billows fixed,  
 And motionless forever. Motionless?—  
 No—they are all unchained again. The clouds  
 Sweep over with their shadows, and, beneath,  
 The surface rolls and fluctuates to the eye;  
 Dark hollows seem to glide along and chase  
 The sunny ridges. Breezes of the South!  
 Who toss the golden and the flame-like flowers,  
 And pass the prairie-hawk that, poised on high,  
 Flaps his broad wings, yet moves not—ye have  
 played

Among the palms of Mexico and vines  
 Of Texas, and have crisped the limpid brooks  
 That from the fountains of Sonora<sup>40</sup> glide  
 Into the calm Pacific—have ye fanned  
 A nobler or a lovelier scene than this?  
 Man hath no part in all this glorious work:  
 The hand that built the firmament hath heaved  
 And smoothed these verdant swells, and sown their  
 slopes

With herbage, planted them with island-groves,  
 And hedged them round with forests. Fitting  
 floor

For this magnificent temple of the sky—  
 With flowers whose glory and whose multitude  
 Rival the constellations! The great heavens  
 Seem to stoop down upon the scene in love,—  
 A nearer vault, and of a tenderer blue,  
 Than that which bends above our Eastern hills.

As o'er the verdant waste I guide my steed,  
 Among the high rank grass that sweeps his sides  
 The hollow beating of his footstep seems  
 A sacrilegious sound. I think of those  
 Upon whose rest he tramples. Are they here—  
 The dead of other days?—and did the dust  
 Of these fair solitudes once stir with life  
 And burn with passion? Let the mighty mounds  
 That overlook the rivers, or that rise  
 In the dim forest crowded with old oaks,

<sup>39</sup> The word *prairie* came into the English language from the French.

<sup>40</sup> A region or state in northwest Mexico.

Answer. A race, that long has passed away,  
 Built them; a disciplined and populous race  
 Heaped, with long toil, the earth, while yet the  
 Greek

Was hewing the Pentelicus<sup>41</sup> to forms  
 Of symmetry, and rearing on its rock  
 The glittering Parthenon.<sup>42</sup> These ample fields  
 Nourished their harvests, here their herds were  
 fed,

When haply by their stalls the bison lowed,  
 And bowed his manèd shoulder to the yoke.  
 All day this desert murmured with their toils,  
 Till twilight blushed, and lovers walked, and  
 wooed

In a forgotten language, and old tunes,  
 From instruments of unremembered form,  
 Gave the soft winds a voice. The red-man came—  
 The roaming hunter-tribes, warlike and fierce,  
 And the mound-builders vanished from the earth.  
 The solitude of centuries untold  
 Has settled where they dwelt. The prairie-wolf<sup>43</sup>  
 Hunts in their meadows, and his fresh-dug den  
 Yawns by my path. The gopher mines the ground  
 Where stood their swarming cities. All is gone;  
 All—save the piles of earth that hold their bones,  
 The platforms where they worshipped unknown  
 gods,

The barriers which they builded from the soil  
 To keep the foe at bay—till o'er the walls  
 The wild beleaguers broke, and, one by one,  
 The strongholds of the plain were forced, and  
 heaped

With corpses. The brown vultures of the wood  
 Flocked to those vast uncovered sepulchres,  
 And sat, unscared and silent, at their feast.  
 Haply some solitary fugitive,  
 Lurking in marsh and forest, till the sense  
 Of desolation and of fear became  
 Bitterer than death, yielded himself to die.  
 Man's better nature triumphed then. Kind words  
 Welcomed and soothed him; the rude conquerors  
 Seated the captive with their chiefs; he chose  
 A bride among their maidens, and at length  
 Seemed to forget—yet ne'er forgot—the wife  
 Of his first love, and her sweet little ones,  
 Butchered, amid their shrieks, with all his race.

<sup>41</sup> A mountain in Attica, Greece, noted for its marble.

<sup>42</sup> The temple of Pallas in Athens, built about 450 B.C.

<sup>43</sup> The coyote.

Thus change the forms of being. Thus arise  
 Races of living things, glorious in strength,  
 And perish, as the quickening breath of God  
 Fills them, or is withdrawn. The red-man, too,  
 Has left the blooming wilds he ranged so long, 90  
 And, nearer to the Rocky Mountains, sought  
 A wilder hunting-ground. The beaver builds  
 No longer by these streams, but far away,  
 On waters whose blue surface ne'er gave back  
 The white man's face—among Missouri's springs,<sup>44</sup>  
 And pools whose issues swell the Oregon<sup>45</sup>—  
 He rears his little Venice. In these plains  
 The bison<sup>46</sup> feeds no more. Twice twenty leagues  
 Beyond remotest smoke of hunter's camp,  
 Roams the majestic brute, in herds that shake 100  
 The earth with thundering steps—yet here I meet  
 His ancient footprints stamped beside the pool.

Still this great solitude is quick with life.  
 Myriads of insects, gaudy as the flowers  
 They flutter over, gentle quadrupeds,  
 And birds, that scarce have learned the fear of  
 man,  
 Are here, and sliding reptiles of the ground,  
 Startlingly beautiful. The graceful deer  
 Bounds to the wood at my approach. The bee,  
 A more adventurous colonist than man, 110  
 With whom he came across the eastern deep,  
 Fills the savannas<sup>47</sup> with his murmurings,  
 And hides his sweets, as in the golden age,  
 Within the hollow oak. I listen long  
 To his domestic hum, and think I hear  
 The sound of that advancing multitude  
 Which soon shall fill these deserts. From the  
 ground  
 Comes up the laugh of children, the soft voice  
 Of maidens, and the sweet and solemn hymn  
 Of Sabbath worshippers. The low of herds 120  
 Blends with the rustling of the heavy grain  
 Over the dark brown furrows. All at once  
 A fresher wind sweeps by, and breaks my dream,  
 And I am in the wilderness alone.  
 1832 1833

<sup>44</sup> The source of the Missouri River is in Montana.

<sup>45</sup> The Columbia River.

<sup>46</sup> The buffalo.

<sup>47</sup> Treeless plains.

<sup>48</sup> This poem reveals Bryant's ideals for himself and for the New York *Evening Post* when he bore the brunt of the attack of extreme Democrat and "Locofoco" newspapers.

The justly famous passage beginning "Truth crushed to earth

### *The Battle-Field* <sup>48</sup>

Once this soft turf, this rivulet's sands,  
 Were trampled by a hurrying crowd,  
 And fiery hearts and armed hands  
 Encountered in the battle-cloud.

Ah! never shall the land forget  
 How gushed the life-blood of her brave—  
 Gushed, warm with hope and courage yet,  
 Upon the soil they fought to save.

Now all is calm, and fresh, and still;  
 Alone the chirp of fitting bird, 10  
 And talk of children on the hill,  
 And bell of wandering kine, are heard.

No solemn host goes trailing by  
 The black-mouthed gun and staggering wain;  
 Men start not at the battle-cry.  
 Oh, be it never heard again!

Soon rested those who fought; but thou  
 Who minglest in the harder strife  
 For truths which men receive not now,  
 Thy warfare only ends with life. 20

A friendless warfare! lingering long  
 Through weary day and weary year;  
 A wild and many-weaponed throng  
 Hang on thy front, and flank, and rear.

Yet nerve thy spirit to the proof,  
 And blench not at thy chosen lot,  
 The timid good may stand aloof,  
 The sage may frown—yet faint thou not.

Nor heed the shaft too surely cast,  
 The foul and hissing bolt of scorn; 30  
 For with thy side shall dwell, at last,  
 The victory of endurance born.

Truth, crushed to earth, shall rise again;  
 Th' eternal years of God are hers;  
 But Error, wounded, writhes in pain,  
 And dies among his worshippers.

shall rise again" was first quoted by Benjamin F. Butler, Attorney-General under Jackson and Van Buren, in a speech made in Tammany Hall. As he closed, a voice of unmistakable brogue shouted, "Hurrah for Shakespeare!" "No," replied Mr. Butler, "not Shakespeare, but a pupil of his in the school of Nature and truth—our own Bryant," when (adds Bryant's biographer, Parke Godwin) the building rang with cheer on cheer.

Yea, though thou lie upon the dust,  
 When they who helped thee flee in fear,  
 Die full of hope and manly trust,  
 Like those who fell in battle here.

40

Another hand thy sword shall wield,  
 Another hand the standard wave,  
 Till from the trumpet's mouth is pealed  
 The blast of triumph o'er thy grave.

1837

1837

### *The Antiquity of Freedom*

Here are old trees, tall oaks, and gnarled pines,  
 That stream with gray-green mosses; here the  
 ground  
 Was never trenched by spade, and flowers spring up  
 Unsovn, and die ungathered. It is sweet  
 To linger here, among the fitting birds  
 And leaping squirrels, wandering brooks, and  
 winds  
 That shake the leaves, and scatter, as they pass,  
 A fragrance from the cedars, thickly set  
 With pale-blue berries. In these peaceful shades—  
 Peaceful, unpruned, immeasurably old—  
 My thoughts go up the long dim path of years,  
 Back to the earliest days of liberty.

10

O FREEDOM! thou art not, as poets dream,  
 A fair young girl, with light and delicate limbs,  
 And wavy tresses gushing from the cap<sup>49</sup>  
 With which the Roman master crowned his slave  
 When he took off the gyves. A bearded man,  
 Armed to the teeth, art thou; one mailed hand  
 Grasps the broad shield, and one the sword; thy  
 brow,

Glorious in beauty though it be, is scarred  
 With tokens of old wars; thy massive limbs  
 Are strong with struggling. Power at thee has  
 launched

20

His bolts, and with his lightnings smitten thee;  
 They could not quench the life thou hast from  
 heaven;

Merciless Power has dug thy dungeon deep,  
 And his swart armorers, by a thousand fires,  
 Have forged thy chain; yet, while he deems thee  
 bound,

<sup>49</sup> A reference to the "liberty cap" of the French revolutionists, adapted from the Roman *pilleus*, given to a slave when freed.

The links are shivered, and the prison-walls  
 Fall outward; terribly thou springest forth,  
 As springs the flame above a burning pile,  
 And shoutest to the nations, who return  
 Thy shoutings, while the pale oppressor flies.

30

Thy birthright was not given by human hands:  
 Thou wert twin-born with man. In pleasant fields,  
 While yet our race was few, thou sat'st with him,  
 To tend the quiet flock and watch the stars,  
 And teach the reed to utter simple airs.  
 Thou by his side, amid the tangled wood,  
 Didst war upon the panther and the wolf,  
 His only foes; and thou with him didst draw  
 The earliest furrow on the mountain-side,  
 Soft with the deluge. Tyranny himself,  
 Thy enemy, although of reverend<sup>50</sup> look,  
 Hoary with many years, and far obeyed,  
 Is later born than thou; and as he meets  
 The grave defiance of thine elder eye,  
 The usurper trembles in his fastnesses.

40

Thou shalt wax stronger with the lapse of years,  
 But he shall fade into a feeblere age—  
 Feebler, yet subtler. He shall weave his snares,  
 And spring them on thy careless steps, and clap  
 His withered hands, and from their ambush call  
 His hordes to fall upon thee. He shall send  
 Quaint maskers, wearing fair and gallant forms  
 To catch thy gaze, and uttering graceful words  
 To charm thy ear; while his sly imps, by stealth,  
 Twine round thee threads of steel, light thread  
 on thread,

50

That grow to fetters; or bind down thy arms  
 With chains concealed in chaplets. Oh! not yet  
 Mayst thou unbrace thy corslet, nor lay by  
 Thy sword; nor yet, O Freedom! close thy lids,  
 In slumber; for thine enemy never sleeps,  
 And thou must watch and combat till the day  
 Of the new earth and heaven.<sup>51</sup> But wouldst  
 thou rest

60

Awhile from tumult and the frauds of men,  
 These old and friendly solitudes invite  
 Thy visit. They, while yet the forest-trees  
 Were young upon the unviolated earth,  
 And yet the moss-stains on the rock were new,  
 Beheld thy glorious childhood, and rejoiced.

70

1842

1842

<sup>50</sup> Venerable.

<sup>51</sup> That is, the millennium.

*"Oh Mother of a Mighty Race"* <sup>52</sup>

Oh mother of a mighty race,  
 Yet lovely in thy youthful grace!  
 The elder dames, thy haughty peers,  
 Admire and hate thy blooming years.  
     With words of shame  
 And taunts of scorn they join thy name.  
 For on thy cheeks the glow is spread  
 That tints thy morning hills with red;  
 Thy step—the wild-deer's rustling feet  
 Within thy woods are not more fleet;  
     Thy hopeful eye  
 Is bright as thine own sunny sky.  
 Ay, let them rail—those haughty ones,  
 While safe thou dwellest with thy sons.  
 They do not know how loved thou art,  
 How many a fond and fearless heart  
     Would rise to throw  
 Its life between thee and the foe.  
 They know not, in their hate and pride,  
 What virtues with thy children bide;  
 How true, how good, thy graceful maids  
 Make bright, like flowers, the valley-shades;  
     What generous men  
 Spring, like thine oaks, by hill and glen.  
 What cordial welcomes greet the guest  
 By thy lone rivers of the West;  
 How faith is kept, and truth revered,  
 And man is loved, and God is feared,  
     In woodland homes,  
 And where the ocean-border foams.  
 There's freedom at thy gates and rest  
 For Earth's down-trodden and opprest,  
 A shelter for the hunted head,  
 For the starved laborer toil and bread.  
     Power, at thy bounds,  
 Stops and calls back his baffled hounds.  
 Oh, fair young mother! on thy brow  
 Shall sit a nobler grace than now.  
 Deep in the brightness of thy skies  
 The thronging years in glory rise,  
     And, as they fleet,  
 Drop strength and riches at thy feet.

<sup>52</sup> Written shortly after his second voyage to Europe and following a visit to his brothers in Illinois, this poem expresses a glorification at once of the New World (as contrasted with the Old) and of the American frontier.

Thine eye, with every coming hour,  
 Shall brighten, and thy form shall tower;  
 And when thy sisters, elder born,  
 Would brand thy name with words of scorn,  
     Before thine eye,  
 Upon their lips the taunt shall die.  
 1846

1847

*Robert of Lincoln* <sup>53</sup>

Merrily swinging on brier and weed,  
 Near to the nest of his little dame,  
 10 Over the mountain-side or mead,  
 Robert of Lincoln is telling his name:  
     Bob-o'-link, bob-o'-link,  
     Spink, spank, spink;  
 Snug and safe is that nest of ours,  
 Hidden among the summer flowers.  
     Chee, chee, chee.  
 Robert of Lincoln is gayly drest, 10  
     Wearing a bright black wedding-coat;  
 White are his shoulders and white his crest.  
 20 Hear him call in his merry note:  
     Bob-o'-link, bob-o'-link,  
     Spink, spank, spink;  
 Look, what a nice new coat is mine,  
 Sure there was never a bird so fine.  
     Chee, chee, chee.  
 Robert of Lincoln's Quaker wife,<sup>54</sup>  
     Pretty and quiet, with plain brown wings, 20  
 Passing at home a patient life,  
     Broods in the grass while her husband sings:  
 30 Bob-o'-link, bob-o'-link,  
     Spink, spank, spink;  
 Brood, kind creature; you need not fear  
 Thieves and robbers while I am here.  
     Chee, chee, chee.  
 Modest and shy as a nun is she;  
     One weak chirp is her only note.  
 Braggart and prince of braggarts is he, 30  
     Pouring boasts from his little throat:  
     Bob-o'-link, bob-o'-link,  
 40 Spink, spank, spink;  
 Never was I afraid of man;  
 Catch me, cowardly knaves, if you can!  
     Chee, chee, chee.

<sup>53</sup> A simple poem dedicated to his favorite bird, the bobolink.

<sup>54</sup> The female bobolink, so called because of her plain yellowish-brown plumage.

Six white eggs on a bed of hay,  
 Flecked with purple, a pretty sight!  
 There as the mother sits all day,  
 Robert is singing with all his might:  
     Bob-o'-link, bob-o'-link,  
     Spink, spank, spink;  
 Nice good wife, that never goes out,  
 Keeping house while I frolic about.  
     Chee, chee, chee.

Soon as the little ones chip the shell,  
 Six wide mouths are open for food;  
 Robert of Lincoln bestirs him well,  
 Gathering seeds for the hungry brood.  
     Bob-o'-link, bob-o'-link,  
     Spink, spank, spink;  
 This new life is likely to be  
 Hard for a gay young fellow like me.  
     Chee, chee, chee.

Robert of Lincoln at length is made  
 Sober with work, and silent with care;  
 Off is his holiday garment laid,  
 Half forgotten that merry air:  
     Bob-o'-link, bob-o'-link,  
     Spink, spank, spink;  
 Nobody knows but my mate and I  
 Where our nest and our nestlings lie.  
     Chee, chee, chee.

Summer wanes; the children are grown;  
 Fun and frolic no more he knows;  
 Robert of Lincoln's a humdrum crone;  
 Off he flies, and we sing as he goes:  
     Bob-o'-link, bob-o'-link,  
     Spink, spank, spink;  
 When you can pipe that merry old strain,  
 Robert of Lincoln, come back again.  
     Chee, chee, chee.

1855

1855

### *The Poet*<sup>55</sup>

Thou, who wouldst wear the name  
 Of poet mid thy brethren of mankind,  
 And clothe in words of flame

<sup>55</sup> This impassioned plea for emotional intensity in the poet is consonant with Bryant's own analysis of poetry in his "Lectures on Poetry," but hardly with Lowell's quip about Bryant's poetic practice (in *A Fable for Critics*),

There is Bryant, as quiet, as cool, and as dignified,  
 As a smooth, silent iceberg, that never is ignifed . . .

Thoughts that shall live within the general  
 mind!  
 Deem not the framing of a deathless lay  
 The pastime of a drowsy summer day.  
 But gather all thy powers,  
 And wreak them on the verse that thou dost  
 weave,  
 And in thy lonely hours  
 At silent morning or at wakeful eve,  
 While the warm current tingles through thy veins,  
 Set forth the burning words in fluent strains.  
 No smooth array of phrase,  
 Artfully sought and ordered though it be,  
 Which the cold rhymers lays  
 Upon his page with languid industry,  
 Can wake the listless pulse to livelier speed,  
 Or fill with sudden tears the eyes that read.  
 The secret wouldst thou know  
 To touch the heart or fire the blood at will?  
 Let thine own eyes o'erflow;  
 Let thy lips quiver with the passionate thrill;  
 Seize the great thought, ere yet its power be past,  
 And bind, in words, the fleet emotion fast.  
 Then, should thy verse appear  
 Halting and harsh, and all unaptly wrought,  
 Touch the crude line with fear,  
 Save in the moment of impassioned thought;  
 Then summon back the original glow, and mend  
 The strain with rapture that with fire was penned.  
 Yet let no empty gust  
 Of passion find an utterance in thy lay,  
 A blast that whirls the dust  
 Along the howling street and dies away;  
 But feelings of calm power and mighty sweep,  
 Like currents journeying through the windless deep.

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Seek'st thou, in living lays,  
 To limn the beauty of the earth and sky?  
 Before thine inner gaze  
 Let all that beauty in clear vision lie;  
 Look on it with exceeding love, and write  
 The words inspired by wonder and delight.

Of tempests wouldst thou sing,  
 Or tell of battles—make thyself a part  
 Of the great tumult; cling  
 To the tossed wreck with terror in thy heart;

Scalc, with the assaulting host, the rampart's  
height,  
And strike and struggle in the thickest fight.

So shalt thou frame a lay

That haply may endure from age to age, 50  
And they who read shall say:

"What witchery hangs upon this poet's page!  
What art is his the written spells to find  
That sway from mood to mood the willing mind!"  
1863 1864

### *The Death of Lincoln* <sup>56</sup>

Oh, slow to smite and swift to spare,  
Gentle and merciful and just!  
Who, in the fear of God, didst bear  
The sword of power, a nation's trust!

In sorrow by thy bier we stand,  
Amid the awe that hushes all,  
And speak the anguish of a land  
That shook with horror at thy fall.

Thy task is done; the bond are free:  
We bear thee to an honored grave, 10  
Whose proudest monument shall be  
The broken fetters of the slave.

Pure was thy life; its bloody close  
Hath placed thee with the sons of light,  
Among the noble host of those  
Who perished in the cause of Right.  
1865 1865

### *The Flood of Years* <sup>57</sup>

A mighty Hand, from an exhaustless Urn,  
Pours forth the never-ending Flood of Years,  
Among the nations. How the rushing waves  
Bear all before them! On their foremost edge,  
And there alone, is Life. The Present there  
Tosses and foams, and fills the air with roar

<sup>56</sup> Written, at the request of the Committee of Arrangements, when the body of Lincoln was carried in funeral procession through New York City, April, 1865.

<sup>57</sup> Uncertain as Bryant was in his younger years about the future life (see "Thanatopsis"), when asked in 1876 whether this poem expressed his own belief concerning immortality, he replied, "Certainly I believe all that is said in the lines. . . quoted; otherwise I could not have written them. I believe in the everlasting life of the soul; and it seems to me that immortality would be but an imperfect gift without the recognition in the life to come of those who are dear to us."

Of mingled noises. There are they who toil,  
And they who strive, and they who feast, and they  
Who hurry to and fro. The sturdy swain—  
Woodman and delver with the spade—is there, 10  
And busy artisan beside his bench,  
And pallid student with his written roll.  
A moment on the mounting billow seen,  
The flood sweeps over them and they are gone.  
There groups of revellers whose brows are twined  
With roses, ride the topmost swell awhile,  
And as they raise their flowing cups and touch  
The clinking brim to brim, are whirled beneath  
The waves and disappear. I hear the jar  
Of beaten drums, and thunders that break forth 20  
From cannon, where the advancing billow sends  
Up to the sight long files of armed men,  
That hurry to the charge through flame and smoke.  
The torrent bears them under, whelmed and hid  
Slayer and slain, in heaps of bloody foam.  
Down go the steed and rider, the plumed chief <sup>58</sup>  
Sinks with his followers; the head that wears  
The imperial diadem goes down beside  
The felon's with cropped ear and branded cheek.  
A funeral-train—the torrent sweeps away 30  
Bearers and bier and mourners. By the bed  
Of one who dies men gather sorrowing,  
And women weep aloud; the flood rolls on;  
The wail is stifled and the sobbing group  
Borne under. Hark to that shrill, sudden shout,  
The cry of an applauding multitude,  
Swayed by some loud-voiced orator who wields  
The living mass as if he were its soul!  
The waters choke the shout and all is still.  
Lo! next a kneeling crowd, and one who spreads 40  
The hands in prayer, the engulfing wave o'ertakes  
And swallows them and him. A sculptor wields  
The chisel, and the stricken marble grows  
To beauty; at his easel, cager-eyed,  
A painter stands, and sunshine at his touch  
Gathers upon his canvas, and life glows;  
A poet, as he paces to and fro,  
Murmurs his sounding lines. Awhile they ride  
The advancing billow, till its tossing crest  
Strikes them and flings them under, while their  
tasks 50

Are yet unfinished. See a mother smile

<sup>58</sup> The phrase, *plumed chief*, may have been suggested to Bryant by the fact that James G. Blaine, nominated for the presidency in 1876 by Col. Robert G. Ingersoll, was called the "Plumed Knight."

On her young babe that smiles to her again;  
 The torrent wrests it from her arms; she shrieks  
 And weeps, and midst her tears is carried down.  
 A beam like that of moonlight turns the spray  
 To glistening pearls; two lovers, hand in hand,  
 Rise on the billowy swell and fondly look  
 Into each other's eyes. The rushing flood  
 Flings them apart: the youth goes down; the maid  
 With hands outstretched in vain, and streaming  
 eyes,

60 Waits for the next high wave to follow him.  
 An aged man succeeds; his bending form  
 Sinks slowly. Mingling with the sullen stream  
 Gleam the white locks, and then are seen no more.

Lo! wider grows the stream—a sea-like flood  
 Saps earth's walled cities; massive palaces  
 Crumble before it; fortresses and towers  
 Dissolve in the swift waters; populous realms  
 Swept by the torrent see their ancient tribes  
 Engulfed and lost; their very languages  
 Stifled, and never to be uttered more.

I pause and turn my eyes, and looking back  
 Where that tumultuous flood has been, I see  
 The silent ocean of the Past, a waste  
 Of waters weltering over graves, its shores  
 Strewn with the wreck of fleets where mast and  
 hull

Drop away piecemeal; battlemented walls  
 Frown idly, green with moss, and temples stand  
 Unroofed, forsaken by the worshipper.

There lie memorial stones, whence time has  
 gnawed

80 The graven legends, thrones of kings o'erturned,  
 The broken altars of forgotten gods,  
 Foundations of old cities and long streets  
 Where never fall of human foot is heard,  
 On all the desolate pavement. I behold  
 Dim glimmerings of lost jewels, far within  
 The sleeping waters, diamond, sardonyx,  
 Ruby and topaz, pearl and chrysolite,  
 Once glittering at the banquet on fair brows  
 That long ago were dust, and all around  
 Strewn on the surface of that silent sea  
 Are withering bridal wreaths, and glossy locks  
 Shorn from dear brows, by loving hands, and scrolls  
 O'er written, haply with fond words of love  
 And vows of friendship, and fair pages flung  
 Fresh from the printer's engine. There they lie  
 A moment, and then sink away from sight.

I look, and the quick tears are in my eyes,  
 For I behold in every one of these  
 A blighted hope, a separate history  
 100 Of human sorrows, telling of dear ties  
 Suddenly broken, dreams of happiness  
 Dissolved in air, and happy days too brief  
 That sorrowfully ended, and I think  
 How painfully must the poor heart have beat  
 In bosoms without number, as the blow  
 Was struck that slew their hope and broke their  
 peace.

Sadly I turn and look before, where yet  
 The Flood must pass, and I behold a mist  
 Where swarm dissolving forms, the brood of  
 Hope,

110 Divinely fair, that rest on banks of flowers,  
 Or wander among rainbows, fading soon  
 And reappearing, haply giving place  
 To forms of grisly aspect such as Fear  
 Shapes from the idle air—where serpents lift  
 The head to strike, and skeletons stretch forth  
 The bony arm in menace. Further on

A belt of darkness seems to bar the way  
 Long, low, and distant, where the Life to come  
 Touches the Life that is. The Flood of Years  
 120 Rolls toward it near and nearer. It must pass  
 That dismal barrier. What is there beyond?  
 Hear what the wise and good have said. Beyond  
 That belt of darkness, still the Years roll on  
 More gently, but with not less mighty sweep.

They gather up again and softly bear  
 80 All the sweet lives that late were overwhelmed  
 And lost to sight, all that in them was good,  
 Noble, and truly great, and worthy of love—

The lives of infants and ingenuous youths,  
 130 Sages and saintly women who have made  
 Their households happy; all are raised and borne  
 By that great current in its onward sweep,  
 Wandering and rippling with caressing waves  
 Around green islands fragrant with the breath  
 Of flowers that never wither. So they pass  
 From stage to stage along the shining course  
 Of that bright river, broadening like a sea.

As its smooth eddies curl along their way  
 They bring old friends together; hands are  
 clasped

140 In joy unspeakable; the mother's arms  
 Again are folded round the child she loved  
 And lost. Old sorrows are forgotten now,

Or but remembered to make sweet the hour  
That overpays them; wounded hearts that bled  
Or broke are healed forever. In the room  
Of this grief-shadowed present, there shall be  
A Present in whose reign no grief shall gnaw

The heart, and never shall a tender tie  
Be broken; in whose reign the eternal Change 150  
That waits on growth and action shall proceed  
With everlasting Concord hand in hand.  
1876 1876

FROM

*Review of Solyman Brown, An Essay on American Poetry* <sup>59</sup>

[Early American Verse]

Of the poetry of the United States different opinions have been entertained, and prejudice on the one side, and partiality on the other, have equally prevented a just and rational estimate of its merits. Abroad, our literature has fallen under unmerited contumely,<sup>60</sup> from those who were but slenderly acquainted with the subject on which they professed to decide; and at home, it must be confessed, that the swaggering and pompous pretensions of many have done not a little to provoke and excite the ridicule of foreigners. Either of these extremes exerts an injurious influence on the cause of letters in our country. To encourage exertion and embolden merit to come forward, it is necessary that they should be acknowledged and rewarded—few will have the confidence to solicit what has been withheld from claims as strong as theirs, or the courage to tread a path which presents no prospect but the melancholy wrecks of those who have gone before them. National gratitude—national pride—every high and generous feeling that attaches us to the land of our birth, or that exalts our characters as individuals, ask of us that we should foster the infant literature of our country, and that genius and industry, employing their efforts to hasten its perfection, should receive, from our hands, that celebrity which reflects as much honour on the nation which confers it as on those

to whom it is extended. On the other hand, it is not necessary for these purposes—it is even detrimental to bestow on mediocrity the praise due to excellence, and still more so is the attempt to persuade ourselves and others into an admiration of the faults of favourite writers. We make but a contemptible figure in the eyes of the world, and set ourselves up as objects of pity to our posterity, when we affect to rank the poets of our own country with those mighty masters of song who have flourished in Greece, Italy and Britain. Such extravagant admiration may spring from a praise-worthy and patriotic motive, but it seems to us that it defeats its own object of encouraging our literature, by seducing those, who would aspire to the favour of the public, into an imitation of imperfect models, and leading them to rely too much on the partiality of their countrymen to overlook their deficiencies. Were our rewards to be bestowed only on what is intrinsically meritorious, merit alone would have any apology for appearing before the public. The poetical adventurer should be taught that it is only the production of genius, taste, and diligence that can find favour at the bar of criticism—that his writings are not to be applauded merely because they are written by an American, and are not decidedly bad; and that he must produce some more satisfactory evidence of his claim to celebrity than an extract from the parish register. To show him what we expect of him, it is as necessary to point out the faults of his predecessors, as to commend their excellences. He must be taught, as well what to avoid, as what to imitate. This is the only way of diffusing and preserving a pure taste, both among those who read and those who write, and, in our opinion, the only way of affording merit a proper and effectual encouragement.

It must, however, be allowed, that the poetry of the United States, though it has not reached that perfection to which some other countries have carried

<sup>59</sup> This selection is a portion of Bryant's review of Solyman Brown's versified survey of classical and modern poetry entitled *An Essay on American Poetry, with Several Miscellaneous Pieces* (New Haven, 1818), which he prepared at the request of Willard Phillips, editor of the *North American Review*, and which appeared in that periodical for July, 1818. After roundly condemning Brown for having "fallen into the great mistake in thinking himself qualified to write a book," Bryant proceeds to give his own estimate of American poetry—one of the earliest justly critical appraisals to be written.

<sup>60</sup> Bryant here refers to such views of American art as were expressed by Sydney Smith in the *Edinburgh Review* for December, 1818.



theirs, is yet even better than we could have been expected to produce, considering that our nation has scarcely seen two centuries since the first of its founders erected their cabins on its soil, that our literary institutions are yet in their infancy, and that our citizens are just beginning to find leisure to attend to intellectual refinements and indulge in intellectual luxury, and the means of rewarding intellectual excellence.

For the first century after the settlement of this country, the few quaint and unskilful specimens of poetry which yet remain to us, are looked upon merely as objects of curiosity, are preserved only in the cabinet of the antiquary, and give little pleasure, if read without reference to the age and people which produced them. A purer taste began after this period to prevail—the poems of the Rev. John Adams,<sup>61</sup> written in the early part of the eighteenth century, which have been considered as no bad specimen of the poetry of his time, are tolerably free from the faults of the generation that preceded him, and show the dawning of an ambition of correctness and elegance. The poetical writings of Joseph Green, Esq.,<sup>62</sup> who wrote about the middle of the same century, have been admired for their humour and the playful ease of their composition.

But, previous to the contest which terminated in the independence of the United States, we can hardly be said to have had any national poetry. Literary ambition was not then frequent amongst us—there was little motive for it, and few rewards. We were contented with considering ourselves as participating in the literary fame of that nation, of which we were a part, and of which many of us were natives, and aspired to no separate distinction. And indeed we might well lay an equal claim, with those who remained on the British soil, to whatever glory the genius and learning as well as the virtue and bravery of other times reflected on the British name. These were qualities which ennobled our common ancestors; and though their graves were not with us, and we were at a distance from the scenes and haunts which were hallowed by their deeds, their studies, and their contemplations, yet we brought with us, and preserved all the more valuable gifts which they left to their posterity and to mankind—their illumination—

their piety—their spirit of liberty—reverence for their memory and example and all the proud tokens of a generous descent.

Yet here was no theatre for the display of literary talent—the worshippers of fame could find no altars erected to that divinity in America, and he who would live by his pen must seek patronage in the parent country. Some men of taste and learning amongst us, might occasionally amuse their leisure with poetical trifles, but a country struggling with the difficulties of colonization, and possessing no superfluous wealth, wanted any other class of men rather than poets. Accordingly we find the specimens of American poetry, before this period, mostly desultory and occasional—rare and delicate exotics, cultivated only by the curious.

On our becoming an independent empire, a different spirit began to manifest itself, and the general ambition to distinguish ourselves as a nation was not without its effect on our literature. It seems to us, that it is from this time only that we can be said to have poets of our own, and from this period it is that we must date the origin of American poetry. About this time, flourished Francis Hopkinson,<sup>63</sup> whose humorous ballad, entitled *The Battle of the Kegs*, is in most of our memories, and some of whose attempts, though deficient in vigour, are not inelegant. The keen and forcible invectives of Dr. Church,<sup>64</sup> which are still recollected by his contemporaries, received an additional edge and sharpness from the exasperated feelings of the times. A writer in verse of inferior note was Philip Freneau, whose pen seems to have been chiefly employed on political subjects, and whose occasional productions, distinguished by a coarse strength of sarcasm, and abounding with allusions to passing events, which is perhaps their greatest merit, attracted in their time considerable notice, and in the year 1786 were collected into a volume. But the influence of that principle which awoke and animated the exertions of all who participated in the political enthusiasm of that time, was still more strongly exemplified in the Connecticut poets—Trumbull, Dwight, Barlow, Humphreys,<sup>65</sup> and Hopkins<sup>66</sup>—who began to write about this period. In all

<sup>63</sup> Francis Hopkinson (1739–91), poet, composer, statesman, lawyer.

<sup>64</sup> Benjamin Church (1734–76), physician, author, poet.

<sup>65</sup> David Humphreys (1752–1818), one of the Connecticut Wits.

<sup>66</sup> Lemuel Hopkins (1750–1801), another one of the Connecticut Wits.

<sup>61</sup> Rev. John Adams (1704–40), New England clergyman, poet, and master of nine languages.

<sup>62</sup> Joseph Green (1706–80), a Boston poet.

the productions of these authors, there is a pervading spirit of *nationality* and patriotism—a desire to reflect credit on the country to which they belonged, which seems, as much as individual ambition, to have prompted their efforts, and which at times gives a certain glow and interest to their manner.

McFingal, the most popular of the writings of the former of these poets, first appeared in the year 1782. This pleasant satire on the adherents of Britain in those times, may be pronounced a tolerably successful imitation of the great work of Butler<sup>67</sup>—though, like every other imitation of that author, it wants that varied and inexhaustible fertility of allusion, which made all subjects of thought—the lightest and most abstruse parts of learning—every thing in the physical and moral world—in art or nature, the playthings of his wit. The work of Trumbull cannot be much praised for the purity of its diction. Yet perhaps great scrupulousness in this particular was not consistent with the plan of the author, and, to give the scenes of his poem their full effect, it might have been thought necessary to adopt the familiar dialect of the country and the times. We think his *Progress of Dulness* a more pleasing poem, as more finished, and more perfect in its kind, and, though written in the same manner, more free from the constraint and servility of imitation. The graver poems of Trumbull contain some vigorous and animated declamation.

Of Dr. Dwight<sup>68</sup> we would speak with all the respect due to talents, to learning, to piety, and a long life of virtuous usefulness—but we must be excused from feeling any high admiration of his poetry. It seems to us modelled upon a manner altogether too artificial and mechanical. There is something strained, violent, and out of nature, in all his attempts. His *Conquest of Canaan* will not secure immortality to its author. In this work the author has been considered by some as by no means happy in the choice of his fable—however this may be, he has certainly failed to avail himself of the advantages it offered him—his epic wants the creations and colourings of an inventive and poetical fancy—the charm, which, in the hands of genius, communicates an interest to the simplest incidents, and something of the illusion of reality to the most improbable fictions. The versification is remarkable for its unbroken monotony. Yet it contains splendid passages, which,

separated from the body of the work, might be admired, but a few pages pall both on the ear and the imagination. It has been urged in its favor that the writer was young—the poetry of his maturer years does not however seem to possess greater beauties or fewer faults. The late Mr. Dennie<sup>69</sup> at one time exerted his ingenuity to render this poem popular with his countrymen; in the year 1800 he published, in the *Farmer's Museum*, a paper printed at Walpole, of which he was the editor, a series of observations and criticism on the *Conquest of Canaan*, after the manner of Addison in those numbers of the *Spectator* which made Milton a favourite with the English people. But this attempt did not meet with success—the work would not sell, and loads of copies yet cumber the shelves of our booksellers. In the other poems of Dr. Dwight, which are generally obnoxious [*sic*] to the same criticisms, he sometimes endeavours to descend to a more familiar style, and entertains his reader with laborious attempts at wit, and here he is still unsuccessful. Parts of his *Greenfield Hill*, and that most unfortunate of his productions, the *Triumph of Infidelity*, will confirm the truth of this remark.

Barlow, when he began to write, was a poet of no inconsiderable promise. His *Hasty Pudding*, one of his earliest productions, is a good specimen of mock-heroic poetry, and his *Vision of Columbus*, at the time of its first appearance, attracted much attention and was hailed as an earnest of better things. It is no small praise to say, that when appointed by the General Assembly of Churches in Connecticut to revise Watts' Version of the Psalms<sup>70</sup> and to versify such as were omitted in that work, he performed the task in a manner which made a near approach to the simplicity and ease of that poet who according to Dr. Johnson,<sup>71</sup> 'has done better than any body else what nobody has done well.' In his maturer years, Barlow became ambitious of distinguishing himself and doing honour to his country by some more splendid and important exertion of his talents, and, for this purpose, projected a national epic, in which was sung the Discovery of America, the successful struggle of the states in the defence of their liberties, and the exalted prospects which were opening before them. It

<sup>69</sup> Joseph Dennie (1736–63), the "Oliver Oldschool" of the *Port Folio*, which he edited.

<sup>70</sup> Sir Isaac Watts (1674–1748), author of the popular *Psalms of David* (1719).

<sup>71</sup> Dr. Samuel Johnson (1709–84).

<sup>67</sup> That is, Samuel Butler's *Hudibras* (1663–68).

<sup>68</sup> Timothy Dwight (1752–1817).

is to be regretted that a design, so honourable and so generously conceived, should have failed. In 1807 appeared the *Columbiad*, which was his poem of the Vision of Columbus, much enlarged, and with such variations as the feelings and reflections of his riper age and judgment led him to make. The *Columbiad* is not, in our opinion, so pleasing a poem, in its present form as in that in which it was originally written. The plan of the work is utterly destitute of interest, and that, which was at first sufficiently 10 wearisome, has become doubly so by being drawn out to its present length. Nor are the additions of much value, on account of the taste in which they are composed. Barlow, in his later poetry, attempted to invigorate his style, but instead of drawing strength and salubrity, from the pure wells of ancient English, he corrupted and debased it with foreign infusions. The imposing but unchaste glitter, which distinguished the manner of Darwin<sup>72</sup> and his imitators, appears likewise to have taken strong hold on his fancy, and he has not scrupled to bestow on his poem much of this meretricious decoration. But notwithstanding the bad taste in which his principal work is composed—20 notwithstanding he cannot be said to write with much pathos, or many of the native felicities of fancy, there is yet enough, in the poetry of Mr. Barlow to prove that, had he fixed his eye on purer models, he might have excelled, not indeed in epic or narrative poetry nor in the delineation of passion and feeling, but in that calm, lofty, sustained style, 30 which suits best with topics of morality and philosophy, and for which the vigour and spirit of his natural manner, whenever he permits it to appear, shew him to have been well qualified.

Humphreys was a poet of humbler pretension. His writings, which were first collected in 1790, are composed in a better taste than those of the two last, and, if he has less genius, he has likewise fewer faults. Some of his lighter pieces are sufficiently pretty. He is most happy when he aims at nothing beyond an 40 elegant mediocrity, and to do him justice this is generally the extent of his ambition. On the whole, he may be considered as sustaining a respectable rank among the poets of our country.

A writer of a different cast from those we have mentioned, and distinguished by a singular boldness of imagination, as well as great humour, was Dr.

<sup>72</sup> Erasmus Darwin (1731–1802), English naturalist and poet, and grandfather of Charles Darwin.

Lemuel Hopkins, who, in 1786, and the year following, in conjunction with Trumbull, Barlow, and Humphreys, and other wits of that time, wrote the *Anarchiad*, a satire, on a plan similar to that of the *Rolliad*, which appeared in the *New Haven Gazette* of those years, and of which the wildest parts are attributed to him. He was likewise author of the *Speech of Hesper*, and some smaller poems, which have been praised for their wit. There is a coarseness and want of polish in his style; and his imagination, daring and original, but unrestrained by a correct judgment, often wanders into absurdities and extravagances. Still, if he had all the madness, he must be allowed to have possessed some of the inspiration of poetry.

One material error of taste pervades the graver productions of these authors, into which it should seem they were led by copying certain of the poets of England, who flourished near the period in which they began to write. It was their highest ambition to attain a certain lofty, measured, declamatory manner—an artificial elevation of style, from which it is impossible to rise or descend without abruptness and violence, and which allows just as much play and freedom to the faculties of the writer as a pair of stilts allows the body. The imagination is confined to one trodden circle, doomed to the chains of a perpetual mannerism, and condemned to tinkle the same eternal tune with its fetters. Their versification, though not equally exceptionable in all, is formed upon the same stately model of balanced and wearisome regularity. Another fault, which arises naturally enough out of the peculiar style which we have imputed to these poets, is the want of pathos and feeling in their writings—the heart is rarely addressed, and never with much power or success. Amidst this coldness of manner, sameness of imagery and monotony of versification, the reader lays down his book, dazzled and fatigued.

In 1800 appeared the poems of William Clifton,<sup>73</sup> who fell, at the age of twenty-seven, a victim to that scourge of our climate which ceases not to waste when other diseases are sated—the pulmonary consumption. There is none of our American poetry, on which we dwell with more pleasure, mingled indeed with regret as the untimely fate of the writer, than these charming remains. Amidst many of the immature effusions of his greener years, and unfinished

<sup>73</sup> William Clifton (1772–99), a Pennsylvania poet.

productions which were never meant to meet the eye of the world, there are to be found specimens of poetry, not only more delicate, classical and polished, but more varied in imagery, and possessing more of that flexibility of style of the want of which in others we have complained, and more faithful to nature and the feelings, than it has often been our lot to meet with, in the works of our native poets. In his later and more finished productions, his diction is refined to an unusual degree of purity, and through this lucid medium the creations of his elegant fancy appear with nothing to obscure their loveliness.

Several respectable additions have been made to the mass of American poetry by Mr. Alsop.<sup>74</sup> His monody on the death of Washington was admired at the time of its appearance. The public is likewise indebted to him for a version of the poem of Silius Italicus on the Punic war, and another of the Second Canto of Berni's Orlando Inamorato. Often elegant, but occasionally relapsing into feebleness and languor,<sup>20</sup> his poetry is that of a man of correct and cultivated taste, but of no very fervid genius, nor bending the faculties of his mind with much intensity to the work in which he was engaged.

The posthumous works of St. John Honeywood, Esq.<sup>75</sup> were published in the year 1801. These modest remains, the imperfect but vigorous productions of no common mind, have not been noticed as they deserved. They contain many polished and nervous lines.

We should not expect to be easily pardoned, were we to pass by the writings of a poet who enjoyed, during his life time, so extensive a popularity as the late Mr. [Robert Treat] Paine.<sup>76</sup> The first glow of admiration, which the splendid errors of his manner excited in the public, is now over, and we can calmly estimate his merits and defects. He must be allowed to have possessed an active and fertile fancy. Even in the misty obscurity, which often shrouds his conceptions not only from the understanding of the reader, but, it should seem, from that of the writer himself, there sometimes break out glimpses of greatness and majesty. Yet with a force and exuberance of imagination which, if soberly directed, might have gained him the praise of magnificence, he is perpetually wandering in search of conceits and extrava-

gances. He is ambitious of the epigrammatic style, and often bewilders himself with attempts to express pointedly what he does not conceive clearly. More instances of the false sublime might perhaps be selected from the writings of this poet, than from those of any other of equal talents, who lived in the same period. The brilliancy of Paine's poetry is like the brilliancy of frost-work—cold and fantastic. Who can point out the passage in his works, in which he speaks to the heart in its own language? He was a fine, but misguided genius.

With respect to the prevailing style of poetry, at the present day, in our country, we apprehend that it will be found, in too many instances, tinged with a sickly and affected imitation of the peculiar manner of some of the late popular poets of England.<sup>77</sup> We speak not of a disposition to emulate whatever is beautiful and excellent in their writings—still less would we be understood as intending to censure that sort of imitation which, exploring all the treasures of English poetry, culls from all a diction, that shall form a natural and becoming dress for the conceptions of the writer—this is a course of preparation which every one ought to go through before he appears before the public—but we desire to set a mark on that servile habit of copying, which adopts the vocabulary of some favourite author, and apes the fashion of his sentences, and cramps and forces the ideas into a shape, which they would not naturally have taken, and of which the only recommendation is, not that it is most elegant or most striking, but that it bears some resemblance to the manner of him who is proposed as a model. This way of writing has an air of poverty and meanness—it seems to indicate a paucity of reading as well as perversion of taste—it might almost lead us to suspect that the writer had but one or two examples of poetical composition in his hands, and was afraid of expressing himself, except according to some formula which they might contain—and it ever has been, and ever will be, the resort of those who are sensible that their works need some factitious recommendation to give them even a temporary popularity.

We have now given a brief summary of what we conceived to be the characteristic merits and defects of our most celebrated American poets. Some names, of which we are not at present aware, equally deserving of notice with those whom we have men-

<sup>74</sup> Richard Alsop (1761-1815), one of the Connecticut Wits.

<sup>75</sup> St. John Honeywood (1763-98).

<sup>76</sup> Robert Treat Paine (1773-1811).

<sup>77</sup> That is, Pope and his followers.

tioned, may have been omitted—some we have passed over, because we were not willing to disturb their passage to that oblivion, towards which, to the honour of our country, they are hastening—and some elegant productions of later date we have not commented on, because we were unwilling to tire our readers with a discussion which they may think already exhausted.

On the whole there seems to be more good taste among those who read, than those who write poetry in our country. With respect to the poets whom we have enumerated, and whose merits we have discussed, we think the judgment pronounced on their works by the public will be found, generally speaking, just. They hold that station in our literature to which they are entitled, and could hardly be admired more than they are, without danger to the taste of the nation. We know of no instance in which great

poetical merit has come forward, and finding its claims unallowed, been obliged to retire to the shade from which it emerged. Whenever splendid talents of this description shall appear, we believe that there will be found a disposition to encourage and reward them. The fondness for literature is fast increasing in our country—and if this were not the case, the patrons of literature have multiplied, of course, and will continue to multiply with the mere growth of our population. The popular English works of the day are reprinted in our country—they are dispersed all over the union—they are to be found in every body's hands—they are made the subject of every body's conversation. What should hinder our native works, if equal in merit, from meeting an equally favourable reception? \* \* \*

1818

1818

## *Lectures on Poetry*

### LECTURE I

#### On the Nature of Poetry <sup>78</sup>

In treating of the subject which has been assigned me, it is obvious that it will be impossible for me to compress into four lectures anything like a complete view of it. I am to speak of one of the most ancient of all arts, of the very earliest and most venerable branch of literature—one which even now exists in many countries that have no other; one, which although it has not in every period been cultivated with the same degree of success, has yet in no age of the world ceased to attract a large degree of the attention of mankind. Not only have the writers of poetry been exceedingly numerous—more so, perhaps, than those of any other class—but poetry has shot forth another branch of literature, her handmaid and satellite, and raised up a large body of authors, who speculate upon what the poets have written, who define the elements and investigate the principles of the art, and fix the degrees of estimation in which its several productions should be held. Not only has the poetry of one age been exceedingly different from that of another, but different styles of

poetry have prevailed at the same time in different nations, different schools of poetry have arisen in the same nation, and different forms of poetical composition have been preferred by the several writers of the same school. So much poetry has been written, and that poetry has been the subject of so much criticism, so much matter for speculation has been collected, and so many reasonings and theories have been framed out of it, that the subject has grown to be one of the most comprehensive in the whole province of literature.

If I were to treat of either of its great subdivisions—if, for example, I were to attempt its history from its earliest origin, through its various stages, to the present time; if I were to analyze the several forms of poetical composition, or to point out the characteristics of the various kinds of poetry that have prevailed at different periods, or to compare the genius of the most illustrious poets—in either case, I could do little more than pass rapidly over the principal topics. The view would be so brief that it would seem like a dry table of the contents of a large work, and would become tedious from its very brevity. I shall, therefore, in the short course of lectures which I have undertaken, attempt no entire view of the subject assigned to me; but shall only endeavor to select a few of the topics which seem to me among the most

<sup>78</sup> This is the first of a series of four lectures which Bryant delivered on the invitation of the Athenæum Society in New York during 1825-26 (but not published until 1884).

interesting, and on which I may imagine that I shall weary you the least.

Of the nature of poetry different ideas have been entertained. The ancient critics<sup>79</sup> seemed to suppose that they did something toward giving a tolerable notion of it by calling it a mimetic or imitative art, and classing it with sculpture and painting. Of its affinity with these arts there can be no doubt; but that affinity seems to me to consist almost wholly in the principles by which they all produce their effect, 10 and not in the manner in which those principles are reduced to practice. There is no propriety in applying to poetry the term *imitative* in a literal and philosophical sense, as there is in applying it to painting and sculpture. The latter speak to the senses; poetry speaks directly to the mind. They reproduce sensible objects, and, by means of these, suggest the feeling or sentiment connected with them; poetry, by the symbols of words, suggests both the sensible 20 object and the association. I should be glad to learn how a poem descriptive of a scene or an event is any more an imitation of that scene or that event than a prose description would be. A prose composition giving an account of the proportions and dimensions of a building, and the materials of which it is constructed, is certainly, so far as mere exactness is concerned, a better imitation of it than the finest poem that could be written about it. Yet who, after all, ever thought of giving such a composition the name of an imitation? The truth is, painting and sculpture 30 are, literally, imitative arts, while poetry is only metaphorically so. The epithet as applied to poetry may be well enough, perhaps, as a figure of speech, but to make a metaphor the foundation of a philosophical classification is putting it to a service in which it is sure to confuse what it professes to make clear.

I would rather call poetry a suggestive art. Its power of affecting the mind by pure suggestion, and employing, instead of a visible or tangible imitation, 40 arbitrary symbols, as unlike as possible to the things with which it deals, is what distinguishes this from its two sister arts. It is owing to its operation by means of suggestion that it affects different minds with such different degrees of force. In a picture or a statue the colors and forms employed by the artist impress the senses with the greatest distinctness. In painting, there is little—in sculpture, there is less—

<sup>79</sup> Such as Aristotle, in his *Poetics*.

for the imagination to supply. It is true that different minds, according to their several degrees of cultivation, will receive different degrees of pleasure from the productions of these arts, and that the moral associations they suggest will be variously felt, and in some instances variously interpreted. Still, the impression made on the senses is in all cases the same; the same figures, the same lights and shades, are seen by all beholders alike. But the creations of Poetry have 10 in themselves nothing of this precision and fixedness of form, and depend greatly for their vividness and clearness of impression upon the mind to which they are presented. Language, the great machine with which her miracles are wrought, is contrived to have an application to all possible things; and wonderful as this contrivance is, and numerous and varied as are its combinations, it is still limited and imperfect, and, in point of comprehensiveness, distinctness, and variety, falls infinitely short of the mighty and diversified world of matter and mind of which it professes to be the representative. It is, however, to the very limitation of this power of language, as it seems to me, that Poetry owes her magic. The most detailed of her descriptions, which, by the way, are not always the most striking, are composed of a few touches; they are glimpses of things thrown into the mind; here and there a trace of the outline; here a gleam of light, and there a dash of shade. But these very touches act like a spell upon the imagination and 20 awaken it to greater activity, and fill it, perhaps, with greater delight than the best defined objects could do. The imagination is the most active and the least susceptible of fatigue of all the faculties of the human mind; its more intense exercise is tremendous, and sometimes unsettles the reason; its repose is only a gentle sort of activity; nor am I certain that it is ever quite unemployed, for even in our sleep it is still awake and busy, and amuses itself with fabricating our dreams. To this restless faculty—which is unsatisfied when the whole of its work is done to its hands, and which is ever wandering from the combination of ideas directly presented to it to other combinations of its own—it is the office of poetry to furnish the exercise in which it delights. Poetry is that art which selects and arranges the symbols of thought in such a manner as to excite it the most powerfully and delightfully. The imagination of the reader is guided, it is true, by the poet, and it is his business to guide it skilfully and agreeably; but the

imagination in the meantime is by no means passive. It pursues the path which the poet only points out, and shapes its visions from the scenes and allusions which he gives. It fills up his sketches of beauty with what suits its own highest conceptions of the beautiful, and completes his outline of grandeur with the noblest images its own stores can furnish. It is obvious that the degree of perfection with which this is done must depend greatly upon the strength and cultivation of that faculty. For example, in the following passage, in which Milton describes the general mother<sup>80</sup> passing to her daily task among the flowers:

With goddess-like demeanor forth she went  
Not unattended, for on her as queen  
A pomp of winning graces waited still.

The coldest imagination, on reading it, will figure to itself, in the person of Eve, the finest forms, attitudes, and movements of female loveliness and dignity, which, after all, are not described, but only hinted at by the poet. A warmer fancy, kindling at the delicate allusions in these lines, will not only bestow these attractions on the principal figure, but will fill the air around her with beauty, and people it with the airy forms of the graces; it will see the delicate proportions of their limbs, the lustre of their flowing hair, and the soft light of their eyes. Take, also, the following passage from the same poet, in which, speaking of Satan, he says:<sup>81</sup>

His face  
Deep scars of thunder had entrenched, and care  
Sat on his faded cheek—but under brows  
Of dauntless courage and considerate pride  
Waiting revenge; cruel his eye but cast  
Signs of remorse and passion to behold  
The fellows of his crime, the followers rather,  
(Far other once beheld in bliss), condemned  
For evermore to have their lot in pain.

The imagination of the reader is stimulated by the hints in this powerful passage to form to itself an idea of the features in which reside this strong expression of malignity and dejection—the brow, the cheek, the eye of the fallen angel, bespeaking courage, pride, the settled purpose of revenge, anxiety, sorrow for the fate of his followers, and fearfully marked with the wrath of the Almighty. There can be no doubt that the picture which this passage calls up in the minds of different individuals will vary

accordingly as the imagination is more or less vivid, or more or less excited in the perusal. It will vary, also, accordingly as the individual is more or less experienced in the visible expression of strong passion, and as he is in the habit of associating the idea of certain emotions with certain configurations of the countenance.

There is no question that one principal office of poetry is to excite the imagination, but this is not its sole, nor perhaps its chief, province; another of its ends is to touch the heart, and, as I expect to show in this lecture, it has something to do with the understanding. I know that some critics have made poetry to consist solely in the exercise of the imagination. They distinguish poetry from pathos. They talk of pure poetry, and by this phrase they mean passages of mere imagery, with the least possible infusion of human emotion. I do not know by what authority these gentlemen take the term poetry from the people, and thus limit its meaning.

In its ordinary acceptance, it has, in all ages and all countries, included something more. When we speak of a poem, we do not mean merely a tissue of striking images. The most beautiful poetry is that which takes the strongest hold of the feelings, and, if it is really the most beautiful, then it is poetry in the highest sense. Poetry is constantly resorting to the language of the passions to heighten the effect of her pictures; and, if this be not enough to entitle that language to the appellation of poetical, I am not aware of the meaning of the term. Is there no poetry in the wrath of Achilles?<sup>82</sup> Is there no poetry in the passage where Lear, in the tent of Cordelia, just recovered from his frenzy, his senses yet infirm and unassured, addresses his daughter as she kneels to ask his blessing?<sup>83</sup>

Pray do not mock me;  
I am a very foolish, fond old man,  
Fourscore and upward:  
Not an hour more or less, and to deal plainly  
I fear I am not in my perfect mind.

Is there no poetry in the remorse of Othello,<sup>84</sup> in the terrible consciousness of guilt which haunts Macbeth,<sup>85</sup> or the lamentations of Antony over the body of his friend, the devoted love of Juliet,<sup>86</sup> and the self-

<sup>80</sup> A reference to *Paradise Lost*, VIII, 59.

<sup>81</sup> *Paradise Lost*, I, 601 ff.

<sup>82</sup> See the opening lines of Homer's *Iliad*.

<sup>83</sup> See *King Lear*, IV, vii, 59 ff.

<sup>84</sup> See *Othello*, V, ii, 259 ff.

<sup>85</sup> See *Macbeth*, Act V.

<sup>86</sup> See *Romeo and Juliet*, II, ii, 84 ff.



sacrificing affection of Cleopatra?<sup>87</sup> In the immortal work of Milton, is there no poetry in the penitence of Adam,<sup>88</sup> or in the sorrows of Eve<sup>89</sup> at being excluded from Paradise? The truth is, that poetry which does not find its way to the heart is scarcely deserving of the name; it may be brilliant and ingenious, but it soon wearies the attention. The feelings and the imagination, when skilfully touched, act reciprocally on each other. For example, when the poet introduces Ophelia,<sup>90</sup> young, beautiful, and unfortunate, the wildness of frenzy in her eye, dressed with fantastic garlands of wild flowers, and singing snatches of old tunes, there is a picture for the imagination, but it is one which affects the heart. But when, in the midst of her incoherent talk, she utters some simple allusion to her own sorrows, as when she says, "We know what we are, but know not what we may be," this touching sentence, addressed merely to our sympathy, strongly excites the imagination. It sets before us the days when she knew sorrow only by name, before her father was slain by the hand of her lover, and before her lover was estranged, and makes us feel the heaviness of that affliction which crushed a being so gentle and innocent and happy.

Those poems, however, as I have already hinted, which are apparently the most affluent of imagery, are not always those which most kindle the reader's imagination. It is because the ornaments with which they abound are not naturally suggested by the subject, not poured forth from a mind warmed and occupied by it; but a forced fruit of the fancy, produced by labor, without spontaneity or excitement.

The language of passion is naturally figurative, but its figures are only employed to heighten the intensity of the expression; they are never introduced for their own sake. Important, therefore, as may be the office of the imagination in poetry, the great spring of poetry is emotion. It is this power that holds the key of the storehouse where the mind has laid up its images, and that alone can open it without violence. All the forms of fancy stand ever in its sight, ready to execute its bidding. Indeed, I doubt not that most of the offences against good taste in this kind of composition are to be traced to the absence of emotion. A desire to treat agreeably or impressively a subject by which the writer is himself little moved, leads him

into great mistakes about the means of effecting his purpose. This is the origin of cold conceits, of prosing reflections, of the minute painting of uninteresting circumstances, and of the opposite extremes of tameness and extravagance. On the other hand, strong feeling is always a sure guide. It rarely offends against good taste, because it instinctively chooses the most effectual means of communicating itself to others. It gives a variety to the composition it inspires, with which the severest taste is delighted. It may sometimes transgress arbitrary rules, or offend against local associations, but it speaks a language which reaches the heart in all countries and all times. Everywhere are the sentiments of fortitude and magnanimity uttered in strains that brace our own nerves, and the dead mourned in accents that draw our tears.

But poetry not only addresses the passions and the imagination; it appeals to the understanding also. So far as this position relates to the principles of taste which lie at the foundation of all poetry, and by which its merits are tried, I believe its truth will not be doubted. These principles have their origin in the reason of things, and are investigated and applied by the judgment. True it is that they may be observed by one who has never speculated about them, but it is no less true that their observance always gratifies the understanding with the fitness, the symmetry, and the congruity it produces. To write fine poetry requires intellectual faculties of the highest order, and among these, not the least important, is the faculty of reason. Poetry is the worst mask in the world behind which folly and stupidity could attempt to hide their features. Fitter, safer, and more congenial to them is the solemn discussion of unprofitable questions. Any obtuseness of apprehension or incapacity for drawing conclusions, which shows a deficiency or want of cultivation of the reasoning power, is sure to expose the unfortunate poet to contempt and ridicule.

But there is another point of view in which poetry may be said to address the understanding—I mean in the direct lessons of wisdom that it delivers. Remember that it does not concern itself with abstract reasonings, nor with any course of investigation that fatigues the mind. Nor is it merely didactic; but this does not prevent it from teaching truths which the mind instinctively acknowledges. The elements of moral truth are few and simple, but their combinations with human actions are as innumerable and

<sup>87</sup> See *Antony and Cleopatra*, I, iii.

<sup>88</sup> See *Paradise Lost*, XI.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>90</sup> See *Hamlet*, IV, v, 42.



diversified as the combinations of language. Thousands of inductions resulting from the application of great principles to human life and conduct lie, as it were, latent in our minds, which we have never drawn for ourselves, but which we admit the moment they are hinted at, and which, though not abstruse, are yet new. Nor are these of less value because they require no laborious research to discover them. The best riches of the earth are produced on its surface, and we need no reasoning to teach us the folly of a 10 people who should leave its harvests ungathered to dig for its ores. The truths of which I have spoken, when possessing any peculiar force or beauty, are properly within the province of the art of which I am treating, and, when recommended by harmony of numbers, become poetry of the highest kind. Accordingly, they abound in the works of the most celebrated poets. When Shakespeare says of mercy,<sup>91</sup>

it is twice blessed—  
It blesses him that gives and him that takes,

does he not utter beautiful poetry as well as unquestionable truth? There are passages also in Milton of the same kind, which sink into the heart like the words of an oracle. For instance:<sup>92</sup>

Evil into the mind of God or man  
May come and go so unapproved, and leave  
No spot or blame behind.

Take, also, the following example from Cowper, in 30 which he bears witness against the guilt and folly of princes:<sup>93</sup>

War is a game which, were their subjects wise,  
Kings should not play at. Nations would do well  
To extort their truncheons from the puny hands  
Of heroes whose infirm and baby minds  
Are gratified with mischief, and who spoil,  
Because men suffer it, their toy—the world.

I call these passages poetry, because the mind instantly acknowledges their truth and feels their force, 40 and is moved and filled and elevated by them. Nor does poetry refuse to carry on a sort of process of reasoning by deducing one truth from another. Her demonstrations differ, however, from ordinary ones by requiring that each step should be in itself beautiful or striking, and that they all should carry the mind

to the final conclusion without the consciousness of labor.

All the ways by which poetry affects the mind are open also to the prose-writer. All that kindles the imagination, all that excites emotion, all those moral truths that find an echo in our bosoms, are his property as well as that of the poet. It is true that in the ornaments of style the poet is allowed a greater license, but there are many excellent poems which are not distinguished by any liberal use of the figures of speech from prose writings composed with the same degree of excitement. What, then, is the ground of the distinction between prose and poetry? This is a question about which there has been much debate,<sup>94</sup> but one which seems to me of easy solution to those who are not too ambitious of distinguishing themselves by profound researches into things already sufficiently clear. I suppose that poetry differs from prose, in the first place, by the employment of metrical 20 harmony. It differs from it, in the next place, by excluding all that disgusts, all that tasks and fatigues the understanding, and all matters which are too trivial and common to excite any emotion whatever. Some of these, verse cannot raise into dignity; to others, verse is an encumbrance: they are, therefore, all unfit for poetry; put them into verse, and they are prose still.

A distinction has been attempted to be made between poetry and eloquence, and I acknowledge that there is one; but it seems to me that it consists solely in metrical arrangement. Eloquence is the poetry of prose; poetry is the eloquence of verse. The maxim that the poet is born and the orator made is a pretty antithesis, but a moment's reflection will convince us that one can become neither without natural gifts improved by cultivation. By eloquence I do not mean mere persuasiveness: there are many processes of argument that are not susceptible of eloquence, because they require close and painful attention. But 30 by eloquence I understand those appeals to our moral perceptions that produce emotion as soon as they are uttered. It is in these that the orator is himself affected with the feelings he would communicate, that his eyes glisten, and his frame seems to dilate, and his voice acquires an unwonted melody, and his sentences arrange themselves into a sort of measure and har-

<sup>91</sup> *Merchant of Venice*, IV, i, 184-5.

<sup>92</sup> *Paradise Lost*, V, 117-9.

<sup>93</sup> William Cowper, *The Task*, V, 187-192.

<sup>94</sup> As in Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria* (1817); see also Wordsworth's remarks in his preface to the second edition of the *Lyrical Ballads* (1800) and Poe's critical essays.

mony, and the listener is chained in involuntary and breathless attention. This is the very enthusiasm that is the parent of poetry. Let the same man go to his closet and clothe in numbers conceptions full of the same fire and spirit, and they will be poetry.

In conclusion, I will observe that the elements of poetry make a part of our natures, and that every individual is more or less a poet. In this "bank-note world," as it has been happily denominated, we sometimes meet with individuals who declare that they have no taste for poetry. But by their leave I will assert they are mistaken; they have it, although they may have never cultivated it. Is there any one among them who will confess himself insensible to the beauty of order or to the pleasure of variety—two principles, the happy mingling of which makes the perfection of poetic numbers? Is there any one whose eye is undelighted with beautiful forms and colors, whose ear is not charmed by sweet sounds, and who sees no loveliness in the returns of light and darkness, 20

and the changes of the seasons? Is there any one for whom the works of Nature have no associations but such as relate to his animal wants? Is there any one to whom her great courses and operations show no majesty, to whom they impart no knowledge, and from whom they hide no secrets? Is there any one who is attached by no ties to his fellow-beings, who has no hopes for the future, and no memory of the past? Have they all forgotten the days and the friends of their childhood, and do they all shut their eyes to the advances of age? Have they nothing to desire and nothing to lament, and are their minds never darkened with the shadows of fear? Is it, in short, for these men that life has no pleasures and no pains, the grave no solemnity, and the world to come no mysteries? All these things are the sources of poetry, and they are not only part of ourselves, but of the universe, and will expire only with the last of the creatures of God.

1884

FROM

*The Right of Workmen to Strike*<sup>95</sup>

Sentence was passed on Saturday on the twenty "men who had determined not to work." The punishment selected, on due consideration, by the judge, was that officers appointed for the purpose should immediately demand from each of the delinquents a sum of money which was named in the sentence of the court. The amount demanded would not have fallen short of the savings of many years. Either the offenders had not parted with these savings, or their brother workmen raised the ransom money for them 30 on the spot. The fine was paid over as required. All is now well; justice has been satisfied. But if the expenses of their families had anticipated the law, and left nothing in their hands, or if friends had not been ready to buy the freedom of their comrades, they would have been sent to prison, and there they would have staid, until their wives and children, besides earning their own bread, had saved enough to redeem the captives from their cells. Such had been their punishment. What was their offence? They had com- 40

mitted the crime of unanimously declining to go to work at the wages offered to them by their masters. They had said to one another, "Let us come out from the meanness and misery of our caste. Let us begin to do what every order more privileged and more honoured is doing everyday. By the means which we believe to be the best let us raise ourselves and our families above the humbleness of our condition. We may be wrong, but we cannot help believing that we might do much if we were true brothers to each other, and would resolve not to sell the only thing which is our own, the cunning of our hands, for less than it is worth." What other things they may have done is nothing to the purpose: it was for this they were condemned; it is for this they are to endure the penalty of the law.

We call upon a candid and generous community to mark that the punishment inflicted upon these twenty "men who had determined not to work" is not directed against the offence of conspiring to prevent others by force from working at low wages, but expressly against the offence of settling by pre-concert the compensation which they thought they were en-

<sup>95</sup> This editorial on the right of workingmen to strike was considered inflammatory when Bryant published it in the *New York Evening Post* on June 13, 1836.

titled to obtain. It is certainly superfluous to repeat, that this journal would be the very last to oppose a law levelled at any attempt to molest the labourer who chooses to work for less than the prices settled by the union. We have said, and to cut off cavil, we say it now again, that a conspiracy to deter, by threats of violence, a fellow workman from arranging his own terms with his employers, is a conspiracy to commit a felony—a conspiracy which, being a crime against liberty, we should be the first to condemn—a conspiracy which no strike should, for its own sake, countenance for a moment—a conspiracy already punishable by the statute, and far easier to reach than the one of which “the twenty” stood accused; but a conspiracy, we must add, that has not a single feature in common with the base and barbarous prohibition under which the offenders were indicted and condemned.

They were condemned because they had determined not to work for the wages that were offered them! Can any thing be imagined more abhorrent to every sentiment of generosity or justice, than the law which arms the rich with the legal right to fix, by assize, the wages of the poor? If this is not SLAVERY, we have forgotten its definition. Strike the right of associating for the sale of labour from the privileges of a freeman, and you may as well at once bind him to a master, or ascribe him to the soil. If it be not in the colour of his skin, and in the poor franchise of naming his own terms in a contract for his work, what advantage has the labourer of the north over the bondman of the south? Punish by human laws a “determination not to work,” make it penal by any other penalty than idleness inflicts, and it matters little whether the task-masters be one or many, an individual or an order, the hateful scheme of slavery will have gained a foothold in the land. And then the meanness of this law, which visits with its malice

those who cling to it for protection, and shelters with all its fences those who are raised above its threats. A late solicitation for its aid against employers, is treated with derision and contempt, but the moment the “masters” invoked its intervention, it came down from its high place with most indecent haste, and has now discharged its fury upon the naked heads of wretches so forlorn, that their worst faults multiply their titles to a liberty which they must learn to win from livelier sensibilities than the barren benevolence of Wealth, or the tardy magnanimity of Power. \* \* \*

“Self-created societies,” says Judge Edwards, “are unknown to the constitution and laws, and will not be permitted to rear their crest and extend their baneful influence over any portion of the community.” If there is any sense in this passage it means that self-created societies are unlawful, and must be put down by the courts. Down then with every literary, every religious, and every charitable association not incorporated! What nonsense is this! Self-created societies *are* known to the constitution and laws, for they are not prohibited, and the laws which allow them will, if justly administered, protect them. But suppose in charity that the reporter has put this absurdity into the mouth of Judge Edwards, and that he meant only those self-created societies which have an effect upon trade and commerce. Gather up then and sweep to the penitentiary all those who are confederated to carry on any business or trade in concert, by fixed rules, and see how many men you would leave at large in this city. The members of every partnership in the place will come under the penalties of the law, and not only these, but every person pursuing any occupation whatever, who governs himself by a mutual understanding with others that follow the same occupation. \* \* \*

1836

June 13, 1836

### *Freedom of Speech*<sup>96</sup>

A meeting of the people of Cincinnati have proclaimed the right of silencing the expression of un-40 popular opinions by violence. We refer our readers to the proceedings of an anti-abolition meeting lately held in that city. They will be found in another part of this paper.

If the meeting had contented itself with declaring

its disapprobation of the tenets of the abolitionists, we should have had nothing to say. They might have exhausted the resources of rhetoric and of language—they might have indulged in the very extravagance and wantonness of vehement condemnation, for

<sup>96</sup> This editorial, published in the *Post* for August 8, 1836, is characteristic of Bryant's devotion to the cause of human liberty

aught we cared; they would still have been in the exercise of a right which the constitution and the laws secure to them. But when they go further, and declare that they have not only a right to condemn certain opinions in others, but the right to coerce those who hold them to silence, it is time to make an immediate and decided stand, and to meet the threat of coercion with defiance.

The Cincinnati meeting, in the concluding resolution offered by Wilson N. Brown, and adopted with the rest, declare in so many words that if they cannot put down the abolitionist press by fair means they will do it by foul; if they cannot silence it by remonstrance, they will silence it by violence; if they cannot persuade it to desist, they will stir up mobs against it, inflame them to madness, and turn their brutal rage against the dwellings, the property, the persons, the lives of the wretched abolitionists and their families. In announcing that they will put them down by force all this is included. Fire, robbery, bloodshed, are the common excesses of an enraged mob. There is no extreme of cruelty and destruction to which in the drunkenness and delirium of its fury it may not proceed. The commotions of the elements can as easily be appeased by appeals to the quality of mercy as these commotions of the human mind; the whirlwind and the lightning might as well be expected to pause and turn aside to spare the helpless and innocent, as an infuriated multitude.

If the abolitionists *must* be put down, and if the community are of that opinion, there is no necessity of violence to effect the object. The community have the power in their own hands; the majority may make a law declaring the discussion of slavery in a certain manner to be a crime, and imposing penalties. The law may then be put in force against the offenders, and their mouths may be gagged in due form, and with all the solemnities of justice.

What is the reason this is not done? The answer is ready. The community are for leaving the liberty of the press untrammelled—there is not a committee that can be raised in any of the State legislatures north of the Potomac who will report in favor of imposing penalties on those who declaim against slavery—there is not a legislature who would sanction such a report—and there is not a single free state the people of which would sustain a legislature in so doing. These are facts, and the advocates of mob law know them to be so.

Who then are the men that issue this invitation to silence the press by violence? Who but an insolent brawling minority, a few noisy fanatics who claim that their own opinions shall be the measure of freedom for the rest of the community, and who undertake to overawe a vast pacific majority by threats of wanton outrage and plunder? These men are for erecting an oligarchy of their own and riding rough shod over the people and the people's rights. They claim a right to repeal the laws established by the majority in favor of the freedom of the press. They make new laws of their own to which they require that the rest of the community shall submit, and in case of a refusal, they threaten to execute them by the ministry of a mob. There is no tyranny or oppression exercised in any part of the world more absolute or more frightful than that which they would establish.

So far as we are concerned we are determined that this despotism shall neither be submitted to nor encouraged. In whatever form it makes its appearance we shall raise our voice against it. We are resolved that the subject of slavery shall be as it ever has been, as free a subject of discussion and argument and declamation, as the difference between whiggism and democracy, or as the difference between the Arminians and the Calvinists. If the press chooses to be silent on the subject it shall be the silence of perfect free will, and not the silence of fear. We hold that this combination of the few to govern the many by the terror of illegal violence, is as wicked and indefensible as a conspiracy to rob on the highway. We hold it to be the duty of good citizens to protest against it whenever and wherever it shows itself, and to resist it if necessary to the death.

One piece of justice must be done to the South. Thousands there are of persons in that quarter of the country who disapprove, as heartily as any citizen of the North can do, the employment of violence against the presses or the preachers of the anti-slavery party. There are great numbers also, as we are well informed, who think that only harm could result from directing the penalties of the law against those who discuss the question of slavery. They are for leaving the mode of discussing this question solely to the calm and considerate good sense of the North, satisfied that the least show of a determination to abridge the liberty of speech in this matter is but throwing oil on the flames.

1836

August 8, 1836

## WASHINGTON IRVING (1783-1859)

Washington Irving enjoyed the signal honor of becoming the first American author to be widely appreciated abroad. The popular success of *The Sketch Book* in England at precisely the moment when British-American animosity had reached a new high made him doubly dear to Americans who had long waited for a native writer capable of scotching the superciliously contemptuous attitude of English critics toward American productions of the spirit. The honor was all the more phenomenal because it was won on purely literary merit. Intellectually, Irving was a lesser man than the more notable of his predecessors. He lacked the high seriousness of a Mather, the philosophical acumen of an Edwards, the versatility of a Franklin, the statesmanship of a Jefferson, and the profundity of a Dwight. Yet he has overshadowed them all and continues today as a more significant figure in the history of American letters than any of them. Relatively unconcerned with great ideas and lacking in emotional intensity or imaginative power, Irving nevertheless possessed a temperament and a style the combination of which enabled him to vary his tone from sentiment and romance to wit and urbanity in a manner which left no doubt that here at last was an American whose gentlemanly geniality was as authentic as his elegant good taste was instinctive. To be sure, his endowments were not prodigious, but they were sufficient to establish him as a man of parts. Far from being a bumptious provincial, he was a cosmopolite, speaking a language of suavity and gentility universally recognized and understood in polite and cultivated circles.

In the attainment of the graces of living he was naturally conditioned by the circumstances surrounding his earlier years. Born in New York City on April 3, 1783, the favorite and last of eleven children of an austere Presbyterian father and a more genially-minded Anglican mother, young Irving grew up in an atmosphere of indulgence. A disposition toward frailty and sensitivity got for him the best that family competence and brotherly favoritism could supply. After eleven years of elementary schooling, he escaped the regularity of a collegiate education which his father had prescribed for his older sons. But because

it was still customary for a gentleman to have a profession, even though he might not practice it, he read intermittently at the law for a half-dozen years in several law offices of New York, notably in that of Judge Josiah Ogden Hoffman, with whose pretty daughter Mathilda he early fell in love. His "inveterate enemies, the fathers of the law," did not, however, prevent his participation, as a gay young man-about-town, in the social whirl of the city or his hobnobbing with a knot of gay young men, known as the "Nine Worthies of Cockloft Hall," who were bent, like himself, on enjoying life in terms of conviviality, feminine society, theatrical entertainment, and literary amusement. Association with literary-minded young dandies like Peter and Gouverneur Kemble, Henry Brevoort, Henry Ogden, James K. Paulding, and his own brothers, William, Peter, and Ebenezer, led to his writing a series of whimsically satirical essays over the signature of "Jonathan Oldstyle, Gent.," published in Peter Irving's paper, the *Morning Chronicle*, during 1802-03. This youthful playing with the pen was interrupted by several trips up the Hudson, another into Canada in the interest of his health, and during 1804-06, an extended tour of Europe. Although the captain of the ship on which he sailed said, when young Irving first came aboard, "There's a chap who will go overboard before we get across," his health was markedly improved during the two years in Europe, which served also to give his manners a brush, and to fill several notebooks with experiences picked up in a constant round of sight-seeing, flirtatious pleasantries, and frivolous entertainment.

Upon his return to New York, he passed the bar examination late in 1806, "by the grace of God and Josiah Hoffman," the chief examiner, and in the following February he set up as a lawyer, at least to the extent of moving into the office of his brother John, at No. 3 Wall Street. But he argued no more cases than Oliver Wendell Holmes later healed broken bodies. During 1807-08 his chief employment was to collaborate with James K. Paulding and his brother William in the writing of a series of twenty periodical essays, entitled *Salmagundi*. To secure variety, they followed the Addisonian scheme of having the

several subjects dealt with treated by several gentlemen, each reminiscent of the members of the Spectator Club. The department of society was under the direction of Anthony Evergreen, Esq.; that of criticism was the special province of William Wizard, Esq.; poetry came from Pindar Cockloft; and the better to motivate their instructions, the authors presented characters and family relationships reminiscent of Addison's Distaffs. Facetiously posing as "critics, amateurs, dilettanti, and cognoscenti," the editors proceeded, in true *Spectator* fashion, "to instruct the young, reform the old, correct the town, and castigate the age." All was in good humor and fun, for, as they declared, "While we continue to go on, we will go on merrily; if we moralize, it shall be but seldom; and on all occasions, we shall be more solicitous to make our readers laugh than cry; for we are laughing philosophers, and clearly of the opinion that wisdom, true wisdom, is a plump, jolly dame, who sits in her arm-chair, laughs right merrily at the farce of life—and takes the world as it goes." So they proceeded to satirize the ways of the fashionable world, ridiculing the pretensions of political upstarts and social climbers, inserting squibs on the theatre, occasionally mixing a little pointed political satire, waging war against boorishness and mediocrity, "folly and stupidity," while teaching "parents . . . how to govern children, girls how to get husbands, and old maids how to do without them."

*Salmagundi* made an impression, created a stir, and became a mild terror in certain quarters of the town. While the editors were concerned primarily with passing phases of contemporary society, some of the numbers retain significance even today as an index to the social milieu in which young Irving moved so easily. One of the most vital features is the series of nine letters of Mustapha, Captain of a Ketch of Tripolitan prisoners, now waiting in New York to be returned to his country, employing his leisure to observe men and manners in the United States, and reporting his observations to Asem Hacchem, Principal Slave-Driver to His Highness the Bashaw of Tripoli. His commentary on American customs and institutions is all the more pointed, coming as it does from a barbarian; his observations on American democracy and his characterization of leading "republicans" like Paine and Jefferson are edged and barbed. Mustapha descants upon the nature of the American government:

To let thee at once into a secret, which is unknown to these people themselves, their government is a pure unadulterated *logocracy*, or government of words. The whole nation does everything *viva voce*, or by word of mouth; and

in this manner is one of the most military nations in existence. Every man who has what is called the gift of gab, that is, a plentiful stock of verbosity, becomes a soldier outright; and is forever in a militant state. The country is entirely defended *vi et lingua*; that is to say, by force of tongues . . .

In this logocratic country, civil wars of great violence, as Mustapha regards election campaigns, are carried on every so often. One is now reported in progress—"a conspiracy, among the higher classes, to dethrone his highness, the present bashaw, and place another in his stead." A good deal of fun is poked at Jefferson's affection for red breeches, his "enlightened" religious opinions, his philosophical pretensions, and his fondness for a certain "professed antediluvian from the Gallic empire"—Tom Paine, of course—who is said to have illuminated two continents "with his principles—and his nose." Throughout the seven years that the present bashaw has been in office, the entire nation has been kept in a blaze, for every slang-whanger has resorted "to his tongue or his pen" to set the country by the ears. Thus did the young Federalist authors proclaim their inherited dislike of insurgent republicanism. Thus, too, Irving the lawyer (although he continued for a while longer to share his brother's office) fades into the background as Irving the writer emerges directly out of the social milieu of early nineteenth-century New York.

His next book owes its inception to the same love of fun-making and the same social background, except that the materials are not of contemporary Manhattan but of the New Amsterdam of the Dutch regime. Begun as a *jeu d'esprit*, in collaboration with his brother Peter, and intended merely as a parody of Dr. Samuel Mitchell's guide-book to New York City, it was expanded by Washington, after Peter withdrew to Liverpool in the interests of the Irving importing business, into a comic history of the Dutch settlements of New York. Like *Salmagundi*, it embodied a great deal of contemporary personal and political satire, born of youthful exuberance, effrontery, and bravado, and it introduces us to Irving the antiquarian—an impulse that played henceforth an increasingly prominent part in his literary development. Aside from its criticism of Jeffersonian democracy and its whimsical satire on pedantic historians and literary classicists, *Diedrich Knickerbocker's History of New York* is "the first great book of comic literature written by an American."

The composition of the book was interrupted in April of 1809 by the sudden death of Mathilda Hoffman. Grief incapacitated Irving for a while; but in the end the hard work necessary to complete *Knicker-*

bocker, the success of the book upon its appearance in 1809, and his transfer in 1811 to the newer and wider scene of Washington as a lobbyist in the interests of the Irving brothers' hardware importing firm helped relegate his grief to the realm of memory. The sentimental story woven by Pierre M. Irving round his uncle's undying and undivided love for Mathilda Hoffman is overdone. Irving was drawn to attractive women all his life, as much after Mathilda's death as before, and there is a long succession of beautiful women in his life to whom he paid court in cavalier phrases and with gallant address, while steadily refusing to accommodate the romantic match-makers who never gave up hope of marrying off one of the most eligible young bachelors of two continents, until he settled down at Sunnyside to bask in the smiles and under the care of his numerous nieces.

Irving's gallantry was of a piece with his gentlemanly, essentially aristocratic, bearing in all other relations of life. Belonging by birth, rearing, and inclination to the well-to-do and aristocratic circle of New York Federalists, he came to hold, more or less unconsciously, their principles of class privilege, class interests, capitalism, stability, and centrality of governmental power. Disliking money-getting and commercial pursuits, he developed into an urbane New Yorker neither personally nor vitally interested in the economic ideals or the political principles of either party. Mechanics and yokels, tinkers and tradesmen, of whatever party, left him cold; and he had little interest in their so-called Rights, abstract or otherwise. One electioneering experience in city politics, shortly after he hung out his shingle, destroyed his taste for the ruck of practical politics, and he concluded, "Truly this saving one's country is a nauseous piece of business, and if patriotism is such a dirty virtue—prithce, no more of it." A gentleman could not meddle with it without getting his fingers soiled. While he was never disdainful of any rich political plum that might fall into his lap, he could not "run with the hungry pack of office-seekers," and he gave up all ideas of saving his country on a government salary. Subsequently, especially after he was thrown upon his own resources, he repeatedly angled for a good political appointment, and eventually he was rewarded with several good diplomatic assignments. He could have had better posts, including the mayoralty of New York City and a cabinet post under Van Buren, but he was neither politician nor statesman. He was a detached, amused observer of life, of the old gentlemanly school, looking about him with genial eye, resolved to make of

life an art, content to leave to "abler heads" the making of converts in religion or politics. Such matters he professed to find "full of perplexity"; so he stuck to his idea that for himself he could do more good to men by entertaining them and thus "keeping mankind in good humor with one another" than by instructing or lecturing them.

It was this same spirit of geniality which led him to say that as a traveler, when he found it impossible to get a dinner to suit his taste, he endeavored to get a taste to suit his dinner. It was this geniality of temperament more than anything else that enabled him to captivate readers of many countries and to get along famously with men of opposing parties or philosophies. He was less interested in the political issues, of which the embroilments of politicians are only the external signs, than in the thing itself—the Federalist attitude toward life as an ideal of living, so that in spite of his indifference to party, he was really more Federalist than the Federalists themselves. Without comprehending all the implications, he was keenly aware of a change coming over the country under Jeffersonian auspices, and he was plainly disturbed by the rebellious and discontented elements among the common people who, in their determination not to remain common, seemed to him to be losing all respect for their betters. He cast his eyes lovingly back toward the good old days when everybody knew and kept his place, and he viewed with suspicion the tendency to forget the graces of living in the grasping for power and money, privileges and rights. Hence *Salmagundi* is an onslaught upon the vile manners of a mercantile, middle-class seaport town; and *Diedrich Knickerbocker's History of New York*, in its Dutch aspects, is a satire upon their sluggish bourgeois nature, their lack of grace, and the "happy equality" of their earth-creeping minds, while, in its attacks upon the Yankees, it is a satire on their ungainly manners and their odious practices of pilfering and money-grubbing. Similarly, in his next books, *The Sketch Book* (1819–20) and *Bracebridge Hall* (1822), the life of a "gentleman," in the eighteenth-century sense of the word—whether the urbane man-of-parts or the eccentric but worthy country squire—is lovingly idealized; while tradesmen, demagogues, upstarts, innovators, levelers, and dullards alike are ridiculed. In Book IV of *Knickerbocker*, the reign of William Kieft serves admirably for Irving's clever satirization of Jefferson and of Jeffersonian democracy. The same motive animates his sympathetic delineation of Rip Van Winkle in *The Sketch Book*—the picture of Rip and his cronies, humorous, honest, and happy in their lethargic contentment, contrasted



with the cantankerous demagoguery of the shabbily pretentious and slatternly democratic village to which Rip returns after his long sleep. *Bracebridge Hall*, *Tales of a Traveller* (1824), and *The Alhambra* (1832); alike, are tinged with the melancholy nostalgia for a beautiful age that has departed—rich in loyalty, solidity, human worth, instead of human rights, in contrast with the present, given over to innovation, social mediocrity, and material acquisitiveness.

Following *Knickerbocker* in 1809, Irving was for ten years more or less at loose ends. Having been made a profit-sharing but generally inactive partner in his brothers' business, he did a small chore of lobbying in Washington in the interests of the firm, but he was more assiduous in attendance upon the White House levees of Dolly Madison than upon the debates in Congress. During 1812–13 he did some editorial work, notably as editor of the *Analectic Magazine*. He wrote some biographical sketches of popular naval heroes of the War of 1812, and in 1814 he himself did a little soldiering as aide-de-camp to Governor Tompkins; and though he saw no action, he annexed the rank of colonel. The next year he sailed for Europe to aid in the conduct of the Liverpool branch of the Irving firm, which, despite his manifold efforts, went from bad to worse during the depression that followed the war. In 1818 the firm went into bankruptcy, and Irving was, for the first time in his life, thrown upon his own resources to earn a livelihood.

Turning down several lucrative editorial offers, he chose to rely upon his pen. Contact with Scott and most of the literary people of Edinburgh and London, including the stimulating people who frequented Murray's drawing-rooms in London, put him in a mood to resume writing after a ten-year interval. The result was *The Sketch Book*, originally published serially in America and England in 1819–20 and reprinted in book form in 1820. Compounded of some thirty separate essays, sketches, and stories, it is a miscellany. About half of the pieces are based on observations of English life and customs, towns, estates, and places rich in legendary lore and tradition. Six are roughly classifiable as literary essays, four are in the nature of traveling reminiscences. Three others—"Rip Van Winkle," "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow," and "The Spectre Bridegroom"—are short stories. Two deal with the American Indian. The remaining three are so miscellaneous as to defy classification.

One of the most noteworthy essays in *The Sketch Book* is entitled "English Writers on America." It represents the first sane and effective word spoken on

the long and rancorous literary controversy between England and America, and it did much to allay the senseless animosity between the two nations. In it, Irving urged his countrymen to forget their resentments, to overcome their inferiority complex, to rise above petty parochialism, and to start thinking like generous-minded, independent Americans. Carefully avoiding all semblance of truckling obsequiousness, he appealed to the British sense of decency and fair play, reminding the English that all they needed to do to retain American good will was to show a mutual spirit of conciliation. He went on to tell Englishmen that it was of comparatively little importance "whether England does us justice or not; it is, perhaps, of far more importance to herself." And suggesting that in the history of the world's great empires, none has yet been exempt from decline and decay, he pointed out that the future destiny of America is as assured as that of England is insecure, adding that if England persists in her short-sighted policy, she may come to rue the day when she repulsed from her side a young nation that has every wish to be friendly, thus destroying "her only chance for real friendship beyond the boundaries of her own dominions." This was good-natured plain-speaking that John Bull could appreciate.

The three tales in *The Sketch Book* are the first examples of what Poe later called the American short story. They represent Irving's most popular contributions to American literature. Essentially re-workings or transcriptions of old German legends (to which Scott first called his attention), they are as original in treatment as they are old in subject matter; for in transferring Germanic *motifs* to the Sleepy Hollow locale and reinvesting German legendary figures in Knickerbocker characteristics, he unconsciously invented a new genre. The success of *The Sketch Book* was so great that it set him off on a series of travel stages in the hope of exploring and capitalizing more fully upon the traditions to be picked up and reworked in that way. His mind was receptive rather than creative, and he had to rely upon what he came across in his travels or in his reading to set his pen to work. Describing his faculties as "desultory" and lacking command of his talents, he admitted that he had to write when he could, not when he would, adding, "I shall occasionally shift my residence and write whatever is suggested by objects before me . . ." His extensive travels and protracted stays in Germany, Austria, France, Spain, and England were the result; and these in turn explain why his pictures are transcripts rather than conceptions; his characters are such as have lived and moved among men rather than



creatures of his imagination. They are derived from his travels or assimilated from books or from fragments of old legends, and they were built up by the memory and the fancy, which patch or combine rather than create. They are given cogency by certain attributes of his mind, the combination of which enabled him to achieve that delicacy of style by which Irving lives today. On this head may be enumerated (1) an inborn, somewhat incalculable feeling for sentiment and, particularly after *Knickerbocker* (1809), sensibility, (2) an equally natural feeling for the Federalistic attitude toward a gentlemanly way of living—geniality, graciousness, urbanity, tastefulness, (3) a feeling for romanticism, imbibed partly from Scott and German literature, and first markedly apparent in *The Sketch Book* (1819), (4) an inherent love for the method of the literary antiquary, especially from *Knickerbocker* onward, (5) an extraordinary sensitivity for sense impressions from without, and (6) a remarkable facility for form within the limits of short units, especially the essay and the short story.

Whether writing *Knickerbocker* sketches, Moorish legends, banditti stories, or Gothic tales, it was the style that chiefly interested him.

I consider a story merely as a frame on which to stretch my materials. It is the play of thought, and sentiment and language; the weaving in of characters, lightly yet expressively delineated; the familiar and faithful exhibition of scenes in common life; and the half concealed vein of humour that is often playing through the whole—these are among what I aim at, and upon which I felicitate myself in proportion as I think I succeed. . . . I believe the works I have written will be oftener re-read than any novel of the size that I could have written. . . .

I have preferred adopting a mode of sketches & short tales rather than long works, because I chose to take a line of writing peculiar to myself; rather than fall into the manner or school of any other writer: and there is a constant activity of thought and nicety of execution required in writings of this kind, more than the world appears to imagine. . . . In these shorter writings every page must have its merit. The author must be continually piquant—woe to him if he makes an awkward sentence or writes a stupid page; the critics are sure to pounce upon it. Yet if he succeed: the very variety & piquancy of his writings; nay their very brevity; makes them frequently recurred to—and when the mere interest of the story is exhausted, he begins to get credit for his touches of pathos or humour; his points of wit or turns of language. . . .

Indeed, Irving's attempts at the novel were abortive. He lacked the requirements of a good novelist—sustained concentration, searching analysis of character, strict construction of plot, and fine adjustment of numberless details into a continuous fabric. The

best of his original works are brief, and he showed a good deal of acumen when he observed, "If the tales . . . should prove to be bad, they will at least be found short." Even *Knickerbocker* is more an aggregate of tales by chapters than a continuous history; while his biographies, which required a minimum of invention, exhibit no great structural skill. His most successful biography, *The Life of Goldsmith* (1849) is good because, aside from his felicity of style, he is in perfect sympathy with his subject. He was unable himself to write a good play, but was excellent in collaboration, and with John Howard Payne he scored a great hit in the comedy, *Charles II* (1824).

Following *Bracebridge Hall* (1822), a kind of sequel to *The Sketch Book*, Irving spent 1823 in Germany, where he planned a German Sketch Book, which appeared in much-modified form as *Tales of a Traveller* in 1824. After periods in London and Paris, he went to Madrid on the invitation of Alexander H. Everett, minister to Spain, to join the American Legation in a purely nominal capacity, for he intended to devote himself to translating a recent Spanish biography of Columbus. There followed a remarkably fecund period, for the Spanish sojourn furnished him with the materials for *The Life of Columbus* (1828), *The Conquest of Granada* (1829), *The Companions of Columbus* (1831), *The Alhambra* (1832), *The Conquest of Spain* (1835), and eventually *The Life of Mahomet* (1850).

In 1832, having been continuously abroad since 1815, he returned to the United States. Like Cooper, he was very much surprised at the altered social, economic, and political complexion of the country; but more readily adaptable than Cooper, he made up his mind to like what he found. All reports that he had while still in Europe had led him to suspect Jackson and Jacksonianism; but when he met Old Hickory, he took a liking to his "rough chivalry" and accordingly came easily to the position of saying, "The more I see of this old cock of the woods, the more I relish his game qualities." He became known as a mild Jackson man, and he resolved to familiarize himself with the new America, especially with the vast, new frontier. An extended tour of the West resulted in three books on the frontier: *Astoria* (1834), a romanticized account of Astor's fur empire, *A Tour of the Prairies* (1835), and *The Adventures of Captain Bonneville* (1837). Moving easily and agreeably among the prophets of the new day, whether John Jacob Astor or Andrew Jackson, he was readily accepted by them. Eager to make capital of his literary reputation, they courted his favor, urging upon him various offices, all of which he had the good sense to decline until, in

1842, he took the ministership to Spain. Following the distinguished diplomatic service which he rendered his country during the difficult years of 1842-45 in Spain, he returned to New York and soon thereafter settled at Sunnyside, in Sleepy Hollow. Here he was near enough to his beloved city to enjoy the theatre and to participate in literary and social affairs. Here he lived the retired life of a country gentleman, devoting himself to the collection of several volumes of miscellanies, *The Life of Mahomet* (1850), and the five-volume *Life of Washington*, which he just lived to complete in 1859.

Irving was no great man. He was not bursting with big ideas or burning messages. He regarded life not from a philosophic, religious, or political, but from a literary, point of view. He never caught the restlessness of the century, and he embraced no schemes for the reformation of mankind. He was content to be a mere *belles-lettres* writer. As early as 1823 he resolved that he must make his way in the literary world on his own terms:

One must take care not to fall into the commonplace of the day. Scott's manner must likewise be widely avoided. In short, I must strike out some way of my own, suited to my own way of thinking and writing. I wish, in everything I do, to write in such a manner that my productions may have something more than the mere interest of narrative to recommend them, which is very evanescent; something, if I

dare to use the phrase, of classic merit, *i.e.*, depending upon style, etc., which gives a production some chance of duration beyond the mere whim and fashion of the day.

His style became part of himself. He had learned, as a young gentleman of fashion, how to turn a pretty phrase; he continued for the rest of his life to write wittily and gracefully—like a gentleman. And since the world does not willingly forget a stylist if he is fortunate enough to find even a few themes that summon all his powers, Irving has outlived men who were intrinsically greater than he. He very wisely calculated that a Washington Irving who would take sides in public arguments and political controversies was less serviceable than a Washington Irving who would portray for the American and for all people the illuminating life of a Washington or the endearing qualities of a Goldsmith. He believed he could do his countrymen a greater service chronicling Hudson River legends and bringing to them a touch of merry England and of romantic Spain than by misapplying his slender genius and tiring his reader's patience with theological disquisitions. He calculated correctly that as an intermediary between old-world culture and new-world rawness, and as a romancer of the romantic and the picturesque in the sphere of *belles-lettres*, he would write to better purpose than as politician or moralist.

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FROM

*Letters of Jonathan Oldstyle, Gent.*LETTER III<sup>1</sup>

Sir,—There is no place of public amusement of which I am so fond as the Theatre.<sup>2</sup> To enjoy this with greater relish, I go but seldom; and I find there is no play, however poor or ridiculous, from which I cannot derive some entertainment.

I was very much taken with a play-bill of last week, announcing, in large capitals, "The Battle of Hexham, or, Days of Old." Here, said I to myself, will be 10 something grand—Days of Old,—my fancy fired at the words. I pictured to myself all the gallantry of chivalry. Here, thought I, will be a display of court manners and true politeness; the play will, no doubt, be garnished with tilts and tournaments; and as to those banditti, whose names make such a formidable appearance on the bills, they will be hung up, every mother's son, for the edification of the gallery.

With such impressions, I took my scat in the pit, and was so impatient that I could hardly attend to 20 the music, though I found it very good.

The curtain rose,—out walked the Queen,<sup>3</sup> with great majesty; she answered my ideas: she was dressed well, she looked well, and she acted well. The Queen was followed by a pretty gentleman, who, from his winking and grinning, I took to be the court-fool; I soon found out my mistake. He was a courtier "high in trust," and either general, colonel, or something of martial dignity. They talked for some time, though I could not understand the drift of their discourse, 30 so I amused myself with eating peanuts.

In one of the scenes I was diverted with the stupidity of a corporal, and his men, who sung a dull song, and talked a great deal about nothing; though I found, by their laughing, there was a great deal of fun in the corporal's remarks. What this scene had to do with the rest of the piece, I could not comprehend; I suspect it was a part of some other play,

<sup>1</sup> This, the third of the nine contributions to the *Morning Chronicle*, a daily newspaper edited by Irving's brother Peter, appeared originally on December 1, 1802. Letters III, IV, and V contain Irving's criticism of the drama and stage in New York City at the time. William Dunlap observed that this early theatrical criticism of Irving's provoked an "excessive irritation" among the actors. The town itself, of course, enjoyed it.

<sup>2</sup> The Park Theatre, which stood opposite the Park, midway between Ann and Beekman streets.

<sup>3</sup> Played by Mrs. Whitlock, a sister of Mrs. Siddons.

thrust in here by accident.

I was then introduced to a cavern, where there were several hard-looking fellows sitting around a table carousing. They told the audience they were banditti. They then sung a gallery song, of which I could understand nothing but two lines:—

The Welshman lik'd to have been chok'd by a mouse,  
But he pull'd him out by the tail.

Just as they had ended this elegant song, their banquet was disturbed by the melodious sound of a horn, and in marched a portly gentleman,<sup>4</sup> who, I found, was their captain. After this worthy gentleman had fumed his hour out, after he had slapped his breast and drawn his sword half a dozen times, the act ended.

In the course of the play, I learnt that there had been, or was, or would be, a battle; but how, or when, or where, I could not understand. The banditti once more made their appearance, and frightened the wife of the portly gentleman, who was dressed in man's clothes, and was seeking her husband. I could not enough admire the dignity of her deportment, the sweetness of her countenance, and the unaffected gracefulness of her action;<sup>5</sup> but who the captain really was, or why he ran away from his spouse, I could not understand. However, they seemed very glad to find one another again; and so at last the play ended, by the falling of the curtain.

I wish the manager would use a drop-scene at the close of the acts; we might then always ascertain the termination of the piece by the green curtain. On this occasion, I was indebted to the polite bows of the actors for this pleasing information. I cannot say that I was entirely satisfied with the play, but I promised myself ample entertainment in the afterpiece, which was called the "Tripolitan Prize." Now, thought I, we shall have some sport for our money; we will, no doubt, see a few of those Tripolitan scoundrels 40 spitted like turkeys for our amusement. Well, sir, the curtain rose—the trees waved in front of the stage, and the sea rolled in the rear; all things looked very

<sup>4</sup> Joseph Hodgkinson, a versatile actor who filled many parts, from Falstaff to a Harlequin.

<sup>5</sup> Mrs. Johnson, said to have been a great favorite with both the public and Irving.

pleasant and smiling. Presently I heard a bustling behind the scenes,—here, thought I, comes a band of fierce Tripolitans, with whiskers as long as my arm. No such thing; they were only a party of village masters and misses taking a walk for exercise,—and very pretty behaved young gentry they were, I assure you; but it was cruel in the manager to dress them in buckram, as it deprived them entirely of the use of their limbs. They arranged themselves very orderly on each side of the stage, and sung something, doubtless very affecting, for they all looked pitiful enough. By and by came up a most tremendous storm: the lightning flashed, the thunder roared, and the rain fell in torrents; however, our pretty rustics stood gaping quietly at one another, until they must have been wet to the skin. I was surprised at their torpidity, till I found they were each one afraid to move first, for fear of being laughed at for their awkwardness. How they got off I do not recollect; but I advise the manager, in a similar case, to furnish each one with a trap-door, through which to make his exit. Yet this would deprive the audience of much amusement; for nothing can be more laughable than to see a body of guards with their spears, or courtiers with their long robes, get across the stage at our theatre.

Scene passed after scene. In vain I strained my eyes to catch a glimpse of a Mahometan phiz. I once heard a great bellowing behind the scenes, and expected to see a strapping Mussulman come bouncing in; but was miserably disappointed, on distinguishing his voice, to find out by his swearing that he was only a Christian. In he came,—an American navy officer,—worsted stockings, olive velvet small-clothes, scarlet vest, pea-jacket, and gold-laced hat—dressed quite in character. I soon found out, by his talk, that he was an American prize-master; that, returning through the Mediterranean with his Tripolitan prize, he was driven by a storm on the coast of England. The honest gentleman seemed, from his actions, to be rather intoxicated; which I could account for in no other way than his having drank a great deal of salt-water, as he swam ashore.

Several following scenes were taken up with hallooing and huzzaing, between the captain, his crew, and the gallery, with several amusing tricks of the captain and his son,—a very funny, mischievous little fellow. Then came the cream of the joke: the captain wanted to put to sea, and the young fellow, who had fallen desperately in love, to stay ashore. Here was a contest between love and honor; such piping of eyes, such

blowing of noses, such slapping of pocket-holes! But Old Junk was inflexible,—What! an American tar desert his duty! (three cheers from the gallery), impossible! American tars forever!! True blue will never stain!! &c. &c. (a continual thundering among the gods.) Here was a scene of distress; here was bathos. The author seemed as much puzzled to know how to dispose of the young tar as Old Junk was. It would not do to leave an American seaman on foreign ground, nor would it do to separate him from his mistress.

Scene the last opened. It seems that another Tripolitan cruiser had bore down on the prize, as she lay about a mile off shore. How a Barbary corsair had got in this part of the world,—whether she had been driven there by the same storm, or whether she was cruising to pick up a few English first-rates, I could not learn. However, here she was. Again were we conducted to the sea-shore, where we found all the village gentry, in their buckram suits, ready assembled to be entertained with the rare show of an American and Tripolitan engaged yard-arm and yard-arm. The battle was conducted with proper decency and decorum, and the Tripolitan very politely gave in,—as it would be indecent to conquer in the face of an American audience.

After the engagement the crew came ashore, joined with the captain and gallery in a few more huzzas, and the curtain fell. How Old Junk, his son, and his son's sweetheart, settled it, I could not discover.

I was somewhat puzzled to understand the meaning and necessity of this engagement between the ships, till an honest old countryman at my elbow said, he supposed this was the Battle of Hexham, as he recollected no fighting in the first piece. With this explanation I was perfectly satisfied.

My remarks upon the audience, I shall postpone to another opportunity.<sup>6</sup>

December 1, 1802

Jonathan Oldstyle.

<sup>6</sup> This promise Irving made good in Letters IV and V, the general tenor of which can be surmised from the last paragraph of the fifth letter:

"I shall conclude with a few words of advice for the benefit of every department . . . I would recommend—

"To the actors—less etiquette, less fustian, less buckram.

"To the orchestra—new music, and more of it.

"To the pit—patience, clean benches, and umbrellas.

"To the boxes—less affectation, less noise, less coxcombs.

"To the gallery—less grog, and better constables;—and,

"To the whole house, inside and out, a total reformation."

"And so much for the Theatre.

"December 11, 1802.

Jonathan Oldstyle."

FROM

*Salmagundi*<sup>7</sup>

FROM NO. I

Saturday, January 24, 1807

As everybody knows, or ought to know, what a SALMAGUND<sup>8</sup> is, we shall spare ourselves the trouble of an explanation; besides, we despise trouble as we do everything low and mean, and hold the man who would incur it unnecessarily as an object worthy our highest pity and contempt. Neither will we puzzle our heads to give an account of ourselves,<sup>9</sup> for two rea- 10  
sons; first, because it is nobody's business; secondly, because if it were, we do not hold ourselves bound to attend to anybody's business but our own; and even *that* we take the liberty of neglecting when it suits our inclination. To these we might add a third, that very few men *can* give a tolerable account of themselves, let them try ever so hard; but this reason, we candidly avow, would not hold good with ourselves.

There are, however, two or three pieces of informa- 20  
tion which we bestow gratis on the public, chiefly because it suits our own pleasure and convenience that they should be known, and partly because we do

<sup>7</sup> The title-page read: SALMAGUNDI; or the Whim-Whams and Opinions of Launcelot Langstaff, & Others. In hoc est hoax, cum quiz et jokesez, / Et smokem, toastem, roastem folksez, / Fe, faw, fum. *Psalmazar*, / With baked, and broiled, and stew'd and toasted, / And fried, and boil'd, and smok'd and roasted, / We treat the town. / New-York: / Published by David Longworth, / At the Shakespeare-Gallery, / 1807.

The text of these selections remains (except for minor verbal changes made by Irving himself in the Paris edition of 1834) that of the work as it was first published by David Longworth, an eccentric theatrical publisher of the day, who, himself a gentleman much given to whim-whams, had a flair for elegant titles and fine books, and who called his shop, in the neighborhood of the old Park Theatre, "The Sentimental Epicure's Ordinary."

<sup>8</sup> A mixed dish, as of chopped meat and pickled herring, with oil, vinegar, pepper, and onions: a miscellany; an olio. *Salmagundi*, the joint production of William Irving, James K. Paulding, and Washington Irving, is so truly a mixed dish that the individual authorship of many of the selections is not easily determined. External evidence is scarce, and internal evidence not always conclusive. In many of the essays all three had a hand. The selections herewith reprinted are mainly by Washington Irving, though Paulding had a hand in both.

<sup>9</sup> Subsequently, however, somewhat lengthy but whimsical sketches of the editors are given: Anthony Everygreen, Esq., in charge of the department of fashionable society; William Wizard, Esq., the territory of theatrical and general literary criticism; Pindar Cockloft, the poetical effusions; and Launcelot Langstaff, Esq., a sort of "Spectator," who roamed as whim or will dictated from one subject to another.

not wish that there should be any ill will between us at the commencement of our acquaintance.

Our intention is simply to instruct the young, reform the old, correct the town, and castigate the age;<sup>10</sup> this is an arduous task, and therefore we undertake it with confidence. We intend for this purpose to present a striking picture of the town; and as everybody is anxious to see his own phiz on canvas, however stupid or ugly it may be, we have no doubt but the whole town will flock to our exhibition. Our picture will necessarily include a vast variety of figures; and should any gentleman or lady be displeased with the inveterate truth of their likenesses, they may ease their spleen by laughing at those of their neighbors—this being what we understand by *poetical justice*.

Like all true and able editors, we consider ourselves infallible; and therefore, with the customary diffidence of our brethren of the quill, we shall take the liberty of interfering in all matters either of a public or private nature. We are critics, amateurs, dilettanti and cognoscenti; and as we know "by the pricking of our thumbs," that every opinion which we may advance in either of those characters will be correct, we are determined, though it may be questioned, contradicted, or even controverted, yet it shall never be revoked.

We beg the public particularly to understand that we solicit no patronage. We are determined, on the

<sup>10</sup> The parallelism of purpose between the editors of *Salmagundi* and Steele and Addison in the *Tatler* and *Spectator* is obvious. Like their British predecessors, they formed an imaginary club, and the better to motivate their instructions, invented characters and family relationships reminiscent of the Distaff family. The editors assured the reader that they wrote for neither fame nor money, and that "so soon as we get tired of reading our own works, we shall discontinue them without the least remorse, whatever the public may think of it. While we continue to go on, we will go on merrily: if we moralize, it shall be but seldom; and, on all occasions, we shall be more solicitous to make our readers laugh than cry; for we are laughing philosophers, and clearly of opinion that wisdom, true wisdom, is a plump, jolly dame, who sits in her arm-chair, laughs right merrily at the farce of life—and takes the world as it goes." Posing as "critics, amateurs, dilettanti, and cognoscenti," the three editors proceeded merrily through twenty numbers of *Salmagundi*, satirizing the ways of the fashionable world, inserting squibs on the theatre, occasionally mixing a little political satire, waging war against "folly and stupidity," and teaching "parents . . . how to govern their children, girls how to get husbands, and old maids how to do without them."

contrary, that the patronage shall be entirely on our side. We have nothing to do with the pecuniary concerns of the paper; its success will yield us neither pride nor profit—nor will its failure occasion to us either loss or mortification. We advise the public, therefore, to purchase our numbers merely for their own sakes; if they do not, let them settle the affair with their consciences and posterity.

To conclude, we invite all editors of newspapers and literary journals to praise us heartily in advance, as we assure them that we intend to deserve their praises. To our next-door neighbor, "Town," \* we hold out a hand of amity, declaring to him that after ours, his paper will stand the best chance for immortality. We proffer an exchange of civilities: he shall furnish us with notices of epic poems and tobacco; and we, in return, will enrich him with original speculations on all manner of subjects, together with "the rummaging of my grandfather's mahogany chest of drawers," "the life and amours of 20 a mine Uncle John," "anecdotes of the Cockloft family," and learned quotations from that unheard of writer of folios, *Linkum Fidelius*.

FROM NO. VII

Saturday, April 4, 1807

*Letter from Mustapha Rub-a-Dub Keli Khan to Asem Hacchem, Principal Slave-Driver to His Highness the Bashaw of Tripoli*

I promised in a former letter,<sup>11</sup> Good Asem, that I would furnish thee with a few hints respecting the nature of the government by which I am held in durance. Though my inquiries for that purpose have

\* The title of a newspaper published in New York, the columns of which, among other miscellaneous topics, occasionally contained strictures on the performances at the theatres. [Irving's note in the Paris edition of his works of 1834.]

<sup>11</sup> The twenty numbers of *Salmagundi* contain nine letters supposedly written by a Tripolitan prisoner detained in New York, Mustapha Rub-a-Dub Keli Khan, who, addressing himself principally to Asem Hacchem, Principal Slave-Driver to His Highness the Bashaw of Tripoli, recounts his observations and experiences in America. His first letter, in No. III, relates his reception in this "most enlightened nation under the sun," where women have souls,—some of them "soul enough to swear,"—and whose government is in the hands of "a grand and most puissant bashaw, whom they dignify with the title of president."

"He is chosen by persons, who are chosen by an assembly, elected by the people—hence the mob is called the sovereign people—and the country, free; the body politic doubtless resembling a vessel, which is best governed by its tail. The present bashaw is a very plain old gentleman—something they say of

been industrious, yet I am not perfectly satisfied with their results; for thou mayst easily imagine that the vision of a captive is overshadowed by the mists of illusion and prejudice, and the horizon of his speculations must be limited indeed. I find that the people of this country are strangely at a loss to determine the nature and proper character of their government. Even their dervises are extremely in the dark as to this particular, and are continually indulging in the most preposterous disquisitions on the subject; some have insisted that it savors of an aristocracy; others maintain that it is a pure democracy; and a third set of theorists declare absolutely that it is nothing more or less than a mobocracy. The latter, I must confess, though still wide in error, have come nearest to the truth. You of course must understand the meaning of these different words, as they are derived from the ancient Greek language, and bespeak loudly the verbal poverty of these poor infidels, who cannot utter a learned phrase without laying the dead languages under contribution. A man, my dear Asem, who talks good sense in his native tongue, is held in tolerable estimation in this country; but a fool who clothes his feeble ideas in a foreign or antique garb, is bowed down to as a literary prodigy. While I conversed with these people in plain English, I was but little attended to; but the moment I prosed away in Greek, every one looked up to me with veneration as an oracle.

30 Although the dervises differ widely in the particulars above mentioned, yet they all agree in terming their government one of the most pacific in the known world. I cannot help pitying their ignorance, and smiling, at times, to see into what ridiculous errors those nations will wander, who are unenlightened by the precepts of Mahomet, our divine prophet, and uninstructed by the five hundred and forty-nine books of wisdom of the immortal Ibrahim Hassan al Fusti. To call this nation pacific! Most preposterous!

a humorist, as he amuses himself with impaling butterflies and pickling tadpoles; he is rather declining in popularity, having given great offense by wearing red breeches and tying his horse to a post."

These, of course, are allusions to President Jefferson's philosophical and scientific activities and to his several eccentricities, such as his fondness for wearing red breeches and his democratic manner of riding unattended, himself hitching his horse to the handiest post—all of which the young Federalist editors thus slyly poked fun at.

Mustapha concludes this first letter with a promise to write a fuller account of the Americans at the first opportunity. *Salmagundi* No. III brought this promised letter, herewith reproduced.

It reminds me of the title assumed by the sheik of that murderous tribe of wild Arabs that desolate the valleys of Belsaden, who styles himself "Star of Courtesy—Beam of the Mercy-Scat."

The simple truth of the matter is, that these people are totally ignorant of their own true character; for, according to the best of my observation, they are the most warlike, and I must say, the most savage nation that I have as yet discovered among all the barbarians. They are not only at war, in their own way, with almost every nation on earth, but they are at the same time engaged in the most complicated knot of civil wars that ever infested any poor unhappy country on which Allah has denounced his malediction!

To let thee at once into a secret, which is unknown to these people themselves, their government is a pure unadulterated *logocracy*, or government of words. The whole nation does everything *viva voce*, or by word of mouth; and in this manner is one of the most military nations in existence. Every man who has what is here called the gift of the gab, that is, a plentiful stock of verbosity, becomes a soldier outright, and is forever in a militant state. The country is entirely defended *vi et lingua*; that is to say, by force of tongues. The account which I lately wrote to our friend, the snorer, respecting the immense army of six hundred men, makes nothing against this observation; that formidable body being kept up, as I have already observed, only to amuse their fair countrywomen by their splendid appearance and nodding plumes; and are, by way of distinction, denominated the "defenders of the fair."

In a logocracy thou well knowest there is little or no occasion for firearms, or any such destructive weapons. Every offensive or defensive measure is enforced by wordy battle and paper war; he who has the longest tongue or readiest quill is sure to gain the victory—will carry horror, abuse, and ink-shed into the very trenches of the enemy; and, without mercy or remorse, put men, women, and children to the point of the—pen!

There is still preserved in this country some remains of that Gothic spirit of knight-errantry which so much annoyed the faithful in the middle ages of the Hegira. As, notwithstanding their martial disposition, they are a people much given to commerce and agriculture, and must necessarily at certain seasons be engaged in these employments, they have accom-

modated themselves by appointing knights, or constant warriors, incessant brawlers, similar to those who, in former ages, swore eternal enmity to the followers of our divine prophet. These knights, denominated editors or *slang-whangers*, are appointed in every town, village, or district, to carry on both foreign and internal warfare, and may be said to keep up a constant firing "in words." O my friend, could you but witness the enormities sometimes committed by these tremendous slang-whangers, your very turban would rise with horror and astonishment. I have seen them extend their ravages even into the kitchens of their opponents, and annihilate the very cook with a blast; and I do assure thee, I beheld one of these warriors attack a most venerable bashaw, and at one stroke of his pen lay him open from the waistband of his breeches to his chin!

There has been a civil war carrying on with great violence for some time past, in consequence of a conspiracy among the higher classes to dethrone his highness, the present bashaw, and place another in his stead. I was mistaken when I formerly asserted to thee that this dissatisfaction arose from his wearing red breeches. It is true, the nation have long held that color in great detestation, in consequence of a dispute they had some twenty years since with the barbarians of the British islands. The color, however, is again rising into favor, as the ladies have transferred it to their heads from the bashaw's—body. The true reason, I am told, is that the bashaw absolutely refuses to believe in the deluge, and in the story of Balaam's ass; maintaining that this animal was never yet permitted to talk except in a genuine logocracy; where, it is true, his voice may often be heard, and is listened to with reverence, as "the voice of the sovereign people." Nay, so far did he carry his obstinacy, that he absolutely invited a professed antediluvian from the Gallic empire,<sup>12</sup> who illuminated the whole country with his principles—and his nose. This was enough to set the nation in a blaze—every slang-whanger resorted to his tongue or his pen; and for seven years have they carried on a most inhuman war, in which volumes of words have been expended, oceans of ink have been shed, nor has any mercy been shown to age, sex, or condition. Every day have these slang-whangers made furious attacks on each other and upon their respective adherents; discharging their

<sup>12</sup> Thomas Paine.

heavy artillery, consisting of large sheets loaded with scoundrel! villain! liar! rascal! numskull! nincompoop! dunderhead! wisacre! blockhead! jackass! and I do swear, by my beard, though I know thou wilt scarcely credit me, that in some of these skirmishes the grand bashaw himself has been wofully pelted! yca, most ignominiously pelted! and yet have these talking desperados escaped without the bastinado!

Every now and then a slang-whanger who has a longer head, or rather a longer tongue than the rest, will elevate his piece and discharge a shot quite across the ocean, leveled at the head of the emperor of France, the king of England, or, wouldst thou believe it, O Ascm, even at his sublime highness the bashaw of Tripoli! These long pieces are loaded with single ball, or language, as tyrant! usurper! robber! tiger! monster! and thou mayest well suppose they occasion great distress and dismay in the camps of the enemy, and are marvelously annoying to the crowned heads at which they are directed. The slang-whanger, though perhaps the mere champion of a village, having fired off his shot, struts about with great self-congratulation, chuckling at the prodigious bustle he must have occasioned, and seems to ask of every stranger, "Well, sir, what do they think of me in Europe?" This is sufficient to show you the manner in which these bloody, or rather windy fellows fight; it is the only mode allowable in a logocracy or government of words. I would also observe that their civil wars have a thousand ramifications.

While the fury of the battle rages in the metropolis, every little town and village has a distinct broil, growing like excrescences out of the grand national altercation, or rather agitating within it, like those complicated pieces of mechanism where there is a "wheel within a wheel."

But in nothing is the verbose nature of this government more evident than in its grand national divan, or Congress, where the laws are framed; this is a blustering, windy assembly, where everything is carried by noise, tumult, and debate; for thou must know that the members of this assembly do not meet together to find wisdom in the multitude of counselors, but to wrangle, call each other hard names, and hear themselves talk. When the Congress opens, the bashaw first sends them a long message, i.e., a huge mass of words—*vox et præterea nihil*,<sup>13</sup> all

<sup>13</sup> A voice and nothing more; sound without sense.

meaning nothing; because it only tells them what they perfectly know already. Then the whole assembly are thrown into a ferment and have a long talk about the quantity of words that are to be returned in answer to this message; and here arise many disputes about the correction and alteration of "if so be's" and "how so ever's." A month, perhaps, is spent in thus determining the precise number of words the answer shall contain; and then another, most probably, in concluding whether it shall be carried to the bashaw on foot, on horseback, or in coaches. Having settled this weighty matter, they next fall to work upon the message itself, and hold as much chattering over it as so many magpies over an addled egg. This done, they divide the message into small portions, and deliver them into the hands of little juntoes of talkers, called committees; these juntoes have each a world of talking about their respective paragraphs, and return the results to the grand divan, which forthwith falls to and retalks the matter over more earnestly than ever. Now after all, it is an even chance that the subject of this prodigious arguing, quarreling, and talking is an affair of no importance, and ends entirely in smoke. May it not then be said, the whole nation have been talking to no purpose? The people, in fact, seem to be somewhat conscious of this propensity to talk, by which they are characterized, and have a favorite proverb on the subject, viz., "all talk and no cider"; this is particularly applied when their Congress, or assembly of all the sage chatterers of the nation, have chattered through a whole session in a time of great peril and momentous event, and have done nothing but exhibit the length of their tongues and the emptiness of their heads. This has been the case more than once, my friend; and to let thee into a secret, I have been told in confidence, that there have been absolutely several old women smuggled into Congress from different parts of the empire; who, having once got on the breeches, as thou mayest well imagine, have taken the lead in debate, and overwhelmed the whole assembly with their garrulity; for my part, as times go, I do not see why old women should not be as eligible to public councils as old men who possess their dispositions; they certainly are eminently possessed of the qualifications requisite to govern in a logocracy.

Nothing, as I have repeatedly insisted, can be done in this country without talking; but they take so long



to talk over a measure that by the time they have determined upon adopting it, the period has elapsed which was proper for carrying it into effect. Unhappy nation! thus torn to pieces by intestine talks! never, I fear, will it be restored to tranquillity and silence. Words are but breath; breath is but air; and air put into motion is nothing but wind. This vast empire, therefore, may be compared to nothing more or less than a mighty windmill, and the orators, and the chattering, and the slang-whangers, are the breezes 10 that put it in motion; unluckily, however, they are apt to blow different ways, and their blasts counter-acting each other—the mill is perplexed, the wheels stand still, the grist is unground, and the miller and his family starved.

Everything partakes of the windy nature of the government. In case of any domestic grievance, or an insult from a foreign foe, the people are all in a buzz; town-meetings are immediately held where the quidnuncs of the city repair, each like an Atlas, with 20 the cares of the whole nation upon his shoulders, each resolutely bent upon saving his country, and each swelling and strutting like a turkey-cock; puffed up with words, and wind, and nonsense. After bustling, and buzzing, and bawling for some time, and after each man has shown himself to be indubitably the greatest personage in the meeting, they pass a string of resolutions, i.e., words, which were previously prepared for the purpose; these resolutions are whimsically denominated the sense of the meet- 30 ing, and are sent off for the instruction of the reigning bashaw, who receives them graciously, puts them into his red breeches pocket, forgets to read them—and so the matter ends.

As to his highness, the present bashaw, who is at the very top of the logocracy, never was a dignitary better qualified for his station. He is a man of superlative ventosity, and comparable to nothing but a huge bladder of wind. He talks of vanquishing all opposition by the force of reason and philosophy: 40 throws his gauntlet at all the nations of the earth, and defies them to meet him—on the field of argument! Is the national dignity insulted, a case in which his highness of Tripoli would immediately call forth his forces, the bashaw of America—utters a speech. Does a foreign invader molest the commerce in the very mouth of the harbors, an insult which would induce his highness of Tripoli to order out his fleets, his highness of America—utters a speech. Are

the free citizens of America dragged from on board the vessels of their country, and forcibly detained in the war ships of another—his highness utters a speech. Is a peaceable citizen killed by the marauders of a foreign power, on the very shores of his country—his highness utters a speech. Does an alarming insurrection break out in a distant part of the empire—his highness utters a speech—nay, more, for here he shows his “energies”—he most intrepidly dispatches a courier on horseback and orders him to ride one hundred and twenty miles a day, with a most formidable army of proclamations, i.e., a collection of words, packed up in his saddle-bags. He is instructed to show no favor nor affection; but to charge the thickest ranks of the enemy, and to speechify and batter by words the conspiracy and the conspirators out of existence. Heavens, my friend, what a deal of blustering is here! It reminds me of a dunghill cock in a farmyard, who, having accidentally in his scratchings found a worm, immediately begins a most vociferous cackling—calls around him his hen-hearted companions, who run chattering from all quarters to gobble up the poor little worm that happened to turn under his eye. O, Ascm! Ascm! on what a prodigious great scale is everything in this country!

Thus, then, I conclude my observations. The infidel nations have each a separate characteristic trait, by which they may be distinguished from each other: the Spaniards, for instance, may be said to sleep upon every affair of importance; the Italians to fiddle upon everything; the French to dance upon everything; the Germans to smoke upon everything; the British islanders to cat upon everything; and the windy subjects of the American logocracy to talk upon everything.

For ever thine,

Mustapha <sup>14</sup>

<sup>14</sup> In this logocratic country, where even wars with foreign countries are waged by the grand bashaw's issuing a document or uttering a speech (referring to Jefferson's numerous official proclamations), Mustapha finds himself much discomfited in consequence of his needing a new pair of breeches. Since he is a prisoner of the United States, this need can be supplied only by direct action of Congress, where, after running the gauntlet of the national slang-whangers in the great divan, his request finally founders on the all-important Jeffersonian watch-word “Economy,” so that a benefit at the theatre is resorted to to supply his pressing want. In other letters Mustapha comments upon the American manner of conducting elections, military reviews, and balls.

FROM NO. XIII

Friday, August 14, 1807

*From My Elbow-Chair*

A RETROSPECT; OR, "WHAT YOU WILL"

Lolling in my elbow-chair this fine summer noon, I feel myself insensibly yielding to that genial feeling of indolence the season is so well fitted to inspire. Every one who is blessed with a little of the delicious languor of disposition that delights in repose, must often have sported among the fairy scenes, the golden visions, the voluptuous reveries, that swim before the imagination at such moments, and which so much resemble those blissful sensations a Mussulman enjoys after his favorite indulgence of opium, which Will Wizard declares can be compared to nothing but "swimming in an ocean of peacocks' feathers." In such a mood everybody must be sensible it would be idle and unprofitable for a man to send his wits a gadding on a voyage of discovery into futurity, or even to trouble himself with a laborious investigation of what is actually passing under his eye. We are, at such times, more disposed to resort to the pleasures of memory than to those of the imagination; and like the wayfaring traveller, reclining for a moment on his staff, had rather contemplate the ground we have travelled, than the region which is yet before us.

I could here amuse myself, and stultify my readers, with a most elaborate and ingenious parallel between authors and travellers; but in this balmy season, which makes men stupid and dogs mad, and when, doubtless, many of our most strenuous admirers have great difficulty in keeping awake through the day, it would be cruel to saddle them with the formidable difficulty of putting two ideas together and drawing a conclusion, or, in the learned phrase, forging *sylogisms in Baroco*—a terrible undertaking for the dog-days! To say the truth, my observations were only intended to prove that this, of all others, is the most auspicious moment, and my present, the most favorable mood for indulging in a retrospect. Whether, like certain great personages of the day, in attempting to prove one thing, I have exposed another; or whether, like certain other great personages, in attempting to prove a great deal, I have proved nothing at all, I leave to my readers to decide, provided they have the power and inclination so to do; but a RETROSPECT will I take, notwithstanding.

I am perfectly aware that in doing this I shall lay myself open to the charge of imitation, than which a man might be better accused of downright house-breaking; for it has been a standing rule with many of my illustrious predecessors, occasionally, and particularly at the conclusion of a volume,<sup>15</sup> to look over their shoulder, and chuckle at the miracles they had achieved. But, as I before professed, I am determined to hold myself entirely independent of all manner of opinions and criticisms, as the only method of getting on in this world in anything like a straight line. True it is, I may sometimes seem to angle a little for the good opinion of mankind, by giving them some excellent reasons for doing unreasonable things; but this is merely to show them, that although I may occasionally go wrong, it is not for want of knowing how to go right; and here I will lay down a maxim, which will forever entitle me to the gratitude of my inexperienced readers, namely, that a man always gets more credit in the eyes of this naughty world for sinning willfully than for sinning through sheer ignorance.

It will doubtless be insisted by many ingenious cavillers, who will be meddling with what does not at all concern them, that this retrospect should have been taken at the commencement of our second volume; it is usual, I know: moreover it is natural. So soon as a writer has once accomplished a volume, he forthwith becomes wonderfully increased in altitude! he steps upon his book as upon a pedestal, and is elevated in proportion to its magnitude. A duodecimo makes him one inch taller—an octavo, three inches—a quarto, six; but he who has made out to swell a folio looks down upon his fellow creatures from such a fearful height that, ten to one, the poor man's head is turned forever afterward. From such a lofty situation, therefore, it is natural an author should cast his eyes behind, and having reached the first landing-place on the stairs of immortality, may reasonably be allowed to plead his privilege to look back over the height he has ascended. I have deviated a little from this venerable custom, merely that our retrospect might fall in the dog days—of all days in the year most congenial to the indulgence of a little self-

<sup>15</sup> During Washington Irving's absence from New York (lobbying in Washington and attending the trial of Aaron Burr in Richmond), Paulding had concluded the first volume of *Salmagundi* at No. X, dated May 16, 1807, thus affording the editors a splendid opportunity to review their work; hence the "Retrospect."

sufficiency, inasmuch as people have then little to do but to retire within the sphere of self, and make the most of what they find there.

Let it not be supposed, however, that we think ourselves a whit the wiser or better since we have finished our volume than we were before; on the contrary, we seriously assure our readers that we were fully possessed of all the wisdom and morality it contains at the moment we commenced writing. It is the world which has grown wiser,—not us; we have <sup>10</sup> thrown our mite into the common stock of knowledge, we have shared our morsel with the ignorant multitude; and so far from elevating ourselves above the world, our sole endeavor has been to raise the world to our own level, and make it as wise as we, its disinterested benefactors.

To a moral writer like myself, who, next to his own comfort and entertainment, has the good of his fellow citizens at heart, a retrospect is but a sorry amusement. Like the industrious husbandman, he often <sup>20</sup> contemplates in silent disappointment his labors wasted on a barren soil, or the seeds he has carefully sown, choked by a redundancy of worthless weeds. I expected long ere this to have seen a complete reformation in manners and morals, achieved by our united efforts. My fancy echoed to the applauding voices of a retrieved generation; I anticipated, with proud satisfaction, the period, not far distant, when our work would be introduced into the academies with which every lane and alley of our cities abounds; <sup>30</sup> when our precepts would be gently inducted into every unlucky urchin by force of birch, and my iron-bound physiognomy, as taken by Will Wizard, be as notorious as that of Noah Webster,<sup>16</sup> junr. Esq. or his no less renowned predecessor, the illustrious Dilworth of spelling-book immortality.<sup>17</sup> But, well-a-day! to let my readers into a profound secret—the expectations of man are like the varied hues that tinge the distant prospect; never to be realized, never to be enjoyed but in perspective. Luckless Launcelot, that the humblest <sup>40</sup>

of the many air castles thou hast erected should prove a “baseless fabric!” Much does it grieve me to confess, that after all our lectures, precepts, and excellent admonitions, the people of New York are nearly as much given to backsliding and ill-nature as ever; they are just as much abandoned to dancing<sup>18</sup> and tea-drinking; and as to scandal, Will Wizard informs me that, by a rough computation, since the last cargo of gunpowder-tea from Canton, no less than eighteen characters have been blown up, besides a number of others that have been woefully shattered.<sup>19</sup>

The ladies still labor under the same scarcity of muslins,<sup>20</sup> and delight in flesh-colored silk stockings; it is evident, however, that our advice has had very considerable effect on them, as they endeavor to act as opposite to it as possible; this being what Evergreen calls female independence. As to Straddles,<sup>21</sup> they abound as much as ever in Broadway, particularly on Sundays; and Wizard roundly asserts that he supped in company with a knot of them a few evenings since, when they liquidated a whole Birmingham consignment, in a batch of imperial champagne. I have, furthermore, in the course of a month past, detected no less than three Giblet<sup>22</sup> families making their first onset toward style and gentility in the very manner we have heretofore reprobated. Nor have our utmost efforts been able to check the progress of that alarming epidemic, the rage for punning,<sup>23</sup> which, though doubtless originally intended merely to ornament and enliven conversation by little sports of fancy, threatens to overrun and poison the whole, like the baneful ivy which destroys the useful plant it first embellished. Now I look upon a habitual punster as a depredator upon conversation; and I have remarked sometimes one of these offenders, sitting silent on the watch for an hour together, until some luckless wight, unfortunately for the ease and quiet of the company, dropped a phrase susceptible of a double

<sup>16</sup> Noah Webster (1758–1843), American lexicographer and “Schoolmaster to America.”

<sup>17</sup> Dr. John Francis, in his remarks on the life and character of Washington Irving, before the New York Historical Society, alludes to this conflict of spelling books at the school in which he and Irving were both instructed. “There was a curious conflict existing in the school between the principal and his assistant instructor; the former a legitimate burgher of the city, the latter a New England pedagogue. So far as I can remember, something depended on the choice of the boy’s parents in the selection of his studies; but if not expressed otherwise, the principal stuck earnestly to Dilworth, while the assistant, for his section of instruction, held to Noah Webster.”

<sup>18</sup> Dancing, particularly the waltz, is often burlesqued, as in No. VII. No. XX, containing an account of the City Assembly from the pen of Mustapha, is a take-off on a fashionable New York ball.

<sup>19</sup> Scandal and gossip are as often and as cleverly satirized as they are in the *Tutler* and the *Spectator*.

<sup>20</sup> A reference to Anthony Evergreen’s strictures on “nudity being all the rage,” in his essay on “Fashions,” in No. III.

<sup>21</sup> A reference to Tom Straddle, a “gemmen” just arrived from Birmingham, England, in an importation of hardware—half beau, half button-maker—whose shoddy social pretensions and foppish Anglomania are objects of satire in No. XII.

<sup>22</sup> A reference to William Wizard’s satire in No. VIII on the family of old Timothy Giblet, typical social climbers of the day.

<sup>23</sup> Punning is frequently the object of attack, particularly in No. X.

meaning:—when—pop, our punster would dart out like a veteran mouser from her covert, seize the unlucky word, and after worrying and mumbling at it until it was capable of no further marring, relapse again into silent watchfulness, and lie in wait for another opportunity. Even this might be borne with, by the aid of a little philosophy; but the worst of it is, they are not content to manufacture puns and laugh heartily at them themselves; but they expect we should laugh with them, which I consider as an intolerable hardship, and a flagrant imposition on good nature. Let those gentlemen fritter away conversation with impunity, and deal out their wits in sixpenny bits if they please; but I beg I may have the choice of refusing currency to their small change. I am seriously afraid, however, that our junto is not quite free from the infection—nay, that it has even approached so near as to menace the tranquillity of my elbow-chair; for, Will Wizard, as we were in caucus the other night, absolutely electrified Pindar and myself with a most palpable and perplexing pun; had it been a torpedo, it could not have more discomposed the fraternity. Sentence of banishment was unanimously decreed; but on his confessing that, like many celebrated wits, he was merely retailing other men's wares on commission, he was for that once forgiven on condition of refraining from such diabolical practices in future. Pindar is particularly outrageous against punsters; and quite astonished and put me to a non-plus a day or two since, by asking abruptly "whether I thought a punster could be a good Christian?" He followed up his question triumphantly by offering to prove, by sound logic and historical fact, that the Roman Empire owed its decline and fall to a pun; and that nothing tended so much to demoralize the French nation, as their abominable rage for *jeux de mots*.

But what, above everything else, has caused me much vexation of spirit, and displeased me most with this stiff-necked nation is, that in spite of all the serious and profound censures of the sage Mustapha, in his various letters—they *will talk!*—they will still wag their tongues, and chatter like very slang-whangers! This is a degree of obstinacy incomprehensible in the extreme; and is another proof how alarming is the force of habit, and how difficult it is to reduce beings, accustomed to talk, to that state of silence which is the very acme of human wisdom.

We can only account for these disappointments

in our moderate and reasonable expectations, by supposing the world so deeply sunk in the mire of delinquency, that not even Hercules, were he to put his shoulder to the axletree, would be able to extricate it. We comfort ourselves, however, by the reflection that there are at least three good men left in this degenerate age to benefit the world by example, should precept ultimately fail. And borrowing, for once, an example from certain sleepy writers who, after the first emotions of surprise at finding their invaluable effusions neglected or despised, console themselves with the idea that 'tis a stupid age, and look forward to posterity for redress—we bequeath our volume to future generations—and much good may it do them. Heaven grant they may be able to read it! for, if our fashionable mode of education continues to improve, as of late, I am under serious apprehensions that the period is not far distant when the discipline of the dancing-master will supersede that of the grammarian: crotchets and quavers supplant the alphabet: and the heels, by an antipodean manoeuvre, obtain entire preëminence over the head. How does my heart yearn for poor, dear posterity when this work shall become unintelligible to our grandchildren as it seems to be to their grandfathers and grandmothers.

In fact—for I love to be candid—we begin to suspect that many people read our numbers merely for their amusement, without paying any attention to the serious truths conveyed in every page. Unpardonable want of penetration! not that we wish to restrict our readers in the article of laughing, which we consider as one of the dearest prerogatives of man, and the distinguishing characteristic which raises him above all other animals: let them laugh, therefore, if they will, provided they profit at the same time, and do not mistake our object. It is one of our indisputable facts that it is easier to laugh ten follies out of countenance than to coax, reason, or flog a man out of one. In this odd, singular, and indescribable age—which is neither the age of gold, silver, iron, brass, chivalry, or *pills*, as Sir John Carr<sup>24</sup> asserts—a grave writer who attempts to attack folly with the heavy artillery of moral reasoning, will fare like Smollett's honest pedant, who clearly demonstrated by angles, etc., after the manner of Euclid, that it was wrong to do evil—and was laughed at for his pains.

<sup>24</sup> John Carr, Esq., of the Honorable Society of the Middle Temple, wrote several slipshod travel books, one of which, *The Stranger in Ireland, a Tour in 1805*, seems to have been popular in America, where it reached a third edition in 1807.

Take my word for it, a little well-applied ridicule, like Hannibal's application of vinegar to rocks, will do more with certain hard heads and obdurate hearts, than all the logic or demonstrations in Longinus or Euclid. But the people of Gotham, wise souls! are so much accustomed to see morality approach them clothed in formidable wigs and sable garbs, "with leaden eye that loves the ground," that they can never recognize her when, drest in gay attire, she comes tripping toward them with smiles and sunshine in her countenance.—Well, let the rogues remain in happy ignorance, for "ignorance is bliss," as the poet says—and I put as implicit faith in poetry as I do in the almanac or the newspaper. We will improve them, without their being the wiser for it, and they shall become better in spite of their teeth, and without their having the least suspicion of the reformation working within them.

Among all our manifold grievances, however, still some small but vivid rays of sunshine occasionally brighten along our path; cheering our steps, and inviting us to persevere.

The public have paid some little regard to a few articles of our advice; they have purchased our numbers freely—so much the better for our publisher; they have read them attentively—so much the better for themselves. The melancholy fate of my dear aunt Charity<sup>25</sup> has had a wonderful effect; and I have now before me a letter from a gentleman who lives opposite to a couple of old ladies, remarkable for the interest they took in his affairs; his apartments were absolutely in a state of blockade, and he was on the point of changing his lodgings, or capitulating, until the appearance of our ninth number, which he immediately sent over with his compliments. The good ladies took the hint, and have scarcely appeared at their window since. As to the wooden gentlemen, our friend, Miss Sparkle,<sup>26</sup> assures me, they are wonder-

<sup>25</sup> Aunt Charity Cockloft, we are told in No. IX, "died of a Frenchman," *i.e.*, in consequence of her inability to satisfy her curiosity regarding "a little, meagre, weazel-faced Frenchman" who moved into a house across the street from the Cockloft mansion. Her failure "to get at the bottom" of "what he could possibly do with so much baggage, and particularly with his parrots and monkeys, or how so small a carcass could have occasion for so many trunks of clothes" so frustrated her scandal-mongering curiosity that she left her window, drooped daily, and in "one little month" died, being "the seventh Cockloft that has died of a whim-wham."

<sup>26</sup> The wooden gentlemen, because of their social gaucherie, were the particular aversion of Miss Sophie Sparkle, the name under which the editors often paid tribute to Mary Fairlie, one of the belles of the day on whom Irving lavished his courtly attention.

fully improved by our criticisms, and sometimes venture to make a remark, or attempt a pun in company, to the great edification of all who happen to understand them. As to the red shawls, they are entirely discarded from the fair shoulders of our ladies—ever since the last importation of finery—nor has any lady, since the cold weather, ventured to expose her elbows to the admiring gaze of scrutinizing passengers. But there is one victory we have achieved which has given us more pleasure than to have written down the whole administration: I am assured, from unquestionable authority, that our young ladies—doubtless in consequence of our weighty admonitions—have not once indulged in that intoxicating, inflammatory, and whirligig dance, the waltz—ever since hot weather commenced. True it is, I understand, an attempt was made to exhibit it by some of the sable fair ones at the last African ball, but it was highly disapproved of by all the respectable elderly ladies present.

These are sweet sources of comfort to atone for the many wrongs and misrepresentations heaped upon us by the world—for even we have experienced its ill-nature. How often have we heard ourselves reproached for the insidious applications of the uncharitable!—how often have we been accused of emotions which never found an entrance into our bosoms!—how often have our sportive effusions been wrested to serve the purposes of particular enmity and bitterness!—Meddlesome spirits! little do they know our disposition; we "lack gall" to wound the feelings of a single innocent individual; we can even forgive them from the very bottom of our souls; may they meet as ready a forgiveness from their own consciences! Like true and independent bachelors, having no domestic cares to interfere with our general benevolence, we consider it incumbent upon us to watch over the welfare of society; and although we are indebted to the world for little else than left-handed favors, yet we feel a proud satisfaction in requiting evil with good, and the sneer of illiberality with the unfeigned smile of good humor. With these mingled motives of selfishness and philanthropy we commenced our work, and if we cannot solace ourselves with the consciousness of having done much good, yet there is still one pleasing consolation left, which the world can neither give nor take away. There are moments—lingering moments of listless indifference and heavy-hearted despondency—when

our best hopes and affections slipping, as they sometimes will, from their hold on those objects to which they usually cling for support, seem abandoned on the wide waste of cheerless existence, without a place to cast anchor; without a shore in view to excite a single wish, or to give a momentary interest to contemplation. We look back with delight upon many of these moments of mental gloom, whiled away by the cheerful exercise of our pen, and consider every such triumph over the spleen as retarding the furrow-<sup>10</sup>

ing hand of time in its insidious encroachments on our brows. If, in addition to our own amusements, we have, as we jogged carelessly laughing along, brushed away one tear of dejection and called forth a smile in its place—if we have brightened the pale countenance of a child of sorrow—we shall feel almost as much joy and rejoicing as a slang-whanger does when he bathes his pen in the heart's blood of a patron and benefactor, or sacrifices one more illustrious victim on the altar of party animosity.

## FROM

*Diedrich Knickerbocker's History of New York*<sup>27</sup>The Author's Apology<sup>28</sup>

The following work, in which, at the outset, nothing more was contemplated than a temporary jeu d'esprit, was commenced in company with my brother, the late Peter Irving, Esq. Our idea was, to parody a small hand-book which had recently appeared, entitled "A Picture of New York." Like that, our work was to begin with an historical sketch; to be followed by notices of the customs, manners, and<sup>20</sup> institutions of the city; written in a serio-comic vein, and treating local errors, follies, and abuses with good-humored satire.

To burlesque the pedantic lore displayed in certain American works, our historical sketch was to commence with the creation of the world; and we laid all kinds of works under contribution for trite citations, relevant, or irrelevant, to give it the proper air of learned research. Before this crude mass of mock<sup>30</sup> erudition could be digested into form, my brother

departed for Europe, and I was left to prosecute the enterprise alone.

I now altered the plan of the work. Discarding all idea of a parody on the Picture of New York, I determined that what had been originally intended as an introductory sketch, should comprise the whole work, and form a comic history of the city. I accordingly moulded the mass of citations and disquisitions into introductory chapters forming the first book; but it soon became evident to me that, like Robinson Crusoe with his boat, I had begun on too large a scale, and that, to launch my history successfully, I must reduce its proportions. I accordingly resolved to confine it to the period of the Dutch domination, which, in its rise, progress, and decline, presented that unity of subject required by classic rule. It was a period, also, at that time almost a terra incognita in history. In fact, I was surprised to find how few of my fellow-citizens were aware that New York had ever<sup>40</sup> been called New Amsterdam, or had heard of the names of its early Dutch governors, or cared a straw about their ancient Dutch progenitors.

This, then, broke upon me as the poetic age of our city; poetic from its very obscurity; and open, like the early and obscure days of ancient Rome, to all embellishments of heroic fiction. I hailed my native city, as fortunate above all other American cities, in having an antiquity thus extending back into the regions of doubt and fable; neither did I conceive I was committing any grievous historical sin in helping out the few facts I could collect in this remote and forgotten region with figments of my own brain, or in giving characteristic attributes to the few names

<sup>27</sup> Printed in Philadelphia and published simultaneously on December 6, 1809, in New York, Philadelphia, Boston, Baltimore, and Charleston. The full title read: "A History of New York, from the Beginning of the World to the End of the Dutch Dynasty. Containing among many Surprising and Curious Matters, the Unutterable Ponderings of Walter the Doubter, the Disastrous Projects of William the Testy, and the Chivalric Achievements of Peter the Headstrong, the three Dutch Governors of New Amsterdam; being the only Authentic History of the Times that ever hath been, or ever will be Published. By Diedrich Knickerbocker."

Irving made numerous changes in subsequent editions, notably in those of 1812 and 1848. All the selections here given follow the text of the "author's revised edition." For a verbatim reprint of the 1809 text, see the edition prepared by Stanley T. Williams and Tremaine McDowell (New York, 1927).

<sup>28</sup> The Author's Apology was prepared for the edition of 1848.

connected with it which I might dig up from oblivion. . . .

I will say this in further apology for my work: that if it has taken unwarrantable liberty with our early provincial history, it has at least turned attention to that history and provoked research. It is only since this work appeared that the forgotten archives of the province have been rummaged, and the facts and personages of the olden time rescued from the dust of oblivion and elevated into whatever importance they may virtually possess.

The main object of my work, in fact, had a bearing wide from the sober aim of history; but one which, I trust, will meet with some indulgence from poetic minds. It was to embody the traditions of our city in amusing form; to illustrate its local humors, customs, and peculiarities; to clothe some scenes and places and familiar names with those imaginative and whimsical associations so seldom met with in our new country, but which live like charms and spells over the cities of the old world, binding the heart of the native inhabitant to his home.

In this I have reason to believe I had in some measure succeeded. Before the appearance of my work the popular traditions of our city were unrecorded; the peculiar and racy customs and usages derived from our Dutch progenitors were unnoticed or regarded with indifference, or adverted to with a sneer. Now they form a convivial currency, and are brought forward on all occasions; they link our whole community together in good humor and good fellowship; they are the rallying points of home feeling; the seasoning of our civic festivities; the staple of local tales and local plesantries; and are so harped upon by writers of popular fiction, that I find myself almost crowded off the legendary ground which I was the first to explore, by the host who have followed in my footsteps.

I dwell on this head because, at the first appearance of my work, its aim and drift were misapprehended by some of the descendants of the Dutch worthies; and because I understand that now and then one may still be found to regard it with captious eye. The far greater part, however, I have reason to flatter myself, receive my good-humored picturings in the same temper in which they were executed; and when I find, after a lapse of nearly forty years, this hap-hazard production of my youth still cherished among them; when I find its very name a "household word" and

used to give the home stamp to every thing recommended for popular acceptance, such as Knickerbocker societies; Knickerbocker insurance companies; Knickerbocker steamboats; Knickerbocker omnibuses; Knickerbocker bread, and Knickerbocker ice; and when I find New Yorkers of Dutch descent priding themselves upon being "genuine Knickerbockers," I please myself with the persuasion that I have struck the right chord; that my dealings with the good old Dutch times, and the customs and usages derived from them, are in harmony with the feelings and humors of my townsmen; that I have opened a vein of pleasant associations and quaint characteristics peculiar to my native place, and which its inhabitants will not willingly suffer to pass away; and that though other histories of New York may appear of higher claims to learned acceptance, and may take their dignified and appropriate rank in the family library; Knickerbocker history will still be received with good-humored indulgence, and be thumbed and chuckled over by the family fireside.

Sunnyside, 1848

W. I.

#### FROM BOOK III <sup>29</sup>

#### In Which Is Recorded the Golden Reign of Wouter Van Twiller

#### CHAPTER I

Of the Renowned Wouter Van Twiller, His Unparalleled Virtues—As Likewise His Unutterable Wisdom in the Law Case of Wandle Schoonhoven and Baront Bleecker—and the Great Admiration of the Public Thereat

Grievous and very much to be commiserated is the task of the feeling historian, who writes the history of his native land. If it fall to his lot to be the

<sup>29</sup> Book I, as Irving's "Apology" indicates, is a mock-serious history of the world prior to the founding of New Amsterdam. Book II relates the founding of the province, Book III records the Golden Reign of Wouter Van Twiller, Book IV covers the reign of William the Testy, and Book V relates the first, Book VI, the second, and Book VII, the third, part of the reign of Peter Stuyvesant.

Aside from the expressed aim and purpose of Irving, as recorded in the "Apology," *Knickerbocker's History* had for the readers of Irving's generation particular and pointed political connotations which are often lost to readers of a later day. In Books I and II he merely burlesques the pedantic methods of historians, but beginning with Book III his satire began to take on pointed political and social significance. Book III contains some half-concealed allusions to President Adams' administration. Book IV is a palpable and very clever burlesque on Jefferson and Jeffersonianism—his person, his pursuits, his policies and prac-



recorder of calamity or crime, the mournful page is watered with his tears—nor can he recall the most prosperous and blissful era, without a melancholy sigh at the reflection, that it has passed away for ever! I know not whether it be owing to an immoderate love for the simplicity of former times, or to that certain tenderness of heart incident to all sentimental historians; but I candidly confess that I cannot look back on the happier days of our city, which I now describe, without great dejection of spirit. With faltering hand do I withdraw the curtain of oblivion, that veils the modest merit of our venerable ancestors, and as their figures rise to my mental vision, humble myself before their mighty shades.

Such are my feelings when I revisit the family mansion of the Knickerbockers, and spend a lonely hour in the chamber where hang the portraits of my forefathers, shrouded in dust, like the forms they represent. With pious reverence do I gaze on the countenances of those renowned burghers, who have preceded me in the steady march of existence—whose sober and temperate blood now meanders through my veins, flowing slower and slower in its feeble conduits, until its current shall soon be stopped for ever!

These, I say to myself, are but frail memorials of the mighty men who flourished in the days of the patriarchs; but who, alas, have long since mouldered in that tomb, towards which my steps are insensibly and irresistibly hastening! As I pace the darkened chamber and lose myself in melancholy musings, the shadowy images around me almost seem to steal once more into existence—their countenances to assume the animation of life—their eyes to pursue me in every movement! Carried away by the delusions of fancy, I almost imagine myself surrounded by the shades of the departed, and holding sweet converse with the worthies of antiquity! Ah, hapless Diedrich! born in a degenerate age, abandoned to the buffetings of fortune—a stranger and a weary pilgrim in thy native land—blest with no weeping wife, nor family of helpless children; but doomed to wander neglected

through those crowded streets, and elbowed by foreign upstarts from those fair abodes where once thine ancestors held sovereign empire!

Let me not, however, lose the historian in the man, nor suffer the doting recollections of age to overcome me, while dwelling with fond garrulity on the virtuous days of the patriarchs—on those sweet days of simplicity and ease, which never more will dawn on the lovely island of Manna-hata.

These melancholy reflections have been forced from me by the growing wealth and importance of New Amsterdam, which, I plainly perceive, are to involve it in all kinds of perils and disasters. Already, as I observed at the close of my last book, they had awakened the attentions of the mother country. The usual mark of protection shown by mother countries to wealthy colonies was forthwith manifested; a governor being sent out to rule over the province and squeeze out of it as much revenue as possible. The arrival of a governor of course put an end to the protectorate of Oloffe the Dreamer. He appears, however, to have dreamt to some purpose during his sway, as we find him afterwards living as a patroon on a great landed estate on the banks of the Hudson; having virtually forfeited all right to his ancient appellation of Kortlandt or Lackland.

It was in the year of our Lord 1629<sup>30</sup> that Mynheer Wouter Van Twiller was appointed governor of the province of Nieuw Nederlandts, under the commission and control of their High Mightinesses the Lords States General of the United Netherlands, and the privileged West India Company.

This renowned old gentleman arrived at New Amsterdam in the merry month of June, the sweetest month in all the year; when Dan Apollo seems to dance up the transparent firmament—when the robin, the thrush, and a thousand other wanton songsters make the woods to resound with amorous ditties, and the luxurious little boblincon revels among the clover blossoms of the meadows—all which happy coincidence persuaded the old dames of New Amsterdam, who were skilled in the art of foretelling events, that this was to be a happy and prosperous administration.

The renowned Wouter (or Walter) Van Twiller, was descended from a long line of Dutch burgo-masters, who had successively dozed away their lives,

tices, and his followers—all arch-enemies of Federalists and Federalism; and the following three books, on the reign of Peter Stuyvesant, contain veiled allusions to Madison, who succeeded Jefferson. For details of the political satire in Books III–VII, see Henry A. Pochmann's edition of Irving in the American Writers Series (New York, 1934), 379–383, and the Williams and McDowell edition, in the American Authors Series, of *Knickerbocker's History* (New York, 1927), esp. lxi–lxvi. The student familiar with the political history of the period will enjoy discovering these political meanings for himself.

<sup>30</sup> Van Twiller arrived in 1633, and was in reality the fifth governor of the province, not the first, as Irving intimates.



and grown fat upon the bench of magistracy in Rotterdam; and who had comported themselves with such singular wisdom and propriety, that they were never either heard or talked of—which, next to being universally applauded, should be the object of ambition of all magistrates and rulers. There are two opposite ways by which some men make a figure in the world; one by talking faster than they think; and the other by holding their tongues and not thinking at all. By the first, many a smatterer acquires the reputation of a man of quick parts; by the other, many a dunderpate, like the owl, the stupidest of birds, comes to be considered the very type of wisdom. This, by the way, is a casual remark, which I would not, for the universe, have it thought I apply to Governor Van Twiller. It is true he was a man shut up within himself, like an oyster, and rarely spoke except in monosyllables; but then it was allowed he seldom said a foolish thing. So invincible was his gravity that he was never known to laugh or even to smile through the whole course of a long and prosperous life. Nay if a joke were uttered in his presence, that set light minded hearers in a roar, it was observed to throw him into a state of perplexity. Sometimes he would deign to inquire into the matter, and when, after much explanation, the joke was made as plain as a pike-staff, he would continue to smoke his pipe in silence, and at length, knocking out the ashes would exclaim, "Well! I see nothing in all that to laugh about."

With all his reflective habits, he never made up his mind on a subject. His adherents accounted for this by the astonishing magnitude of his ideas. He conceived every subject on so grand a scale that he had not room in his head to turn it over and examine both sides of it. Certain it is that if any matter were propounded to him on which ordinary mortals would rashly determine at first glance, he would put on a vague, mysterious look; shake his capacious head; smoke some time in profound silence, and at length observe that "he had his doubts about the matter;" which gained him the reputation of a man slow of belief and not easily imposed upon. What is more, it gained him a lasting name: for to this habit of the mind has been attributed his surname of Twiller; which is said to be a corruption of the original *Twijfeler*, or, in plain English, *Doubter*.

The person of this illustrious old gentleman was formed and proportioned, as though it had been

moulded by the hands of some cunning Dutch statuary, as a model of majesty and lordly grandeur. He was exactly five feet six inches in height, and six feet five inches in circumference. His head was a perfect sphere, and of such stupendous dimensions, that dame Nature, with all her sex's ingenuity, would have been puzzled to construct a neck capable of supporting it; wherefore she wisely declined the attempt, and settled it firmly on the top of his back bone, just between the shoulders. His body was oblong and particularly capacious at bottom; which was wisely ordered by Providence, seeing that he was a man of sedentary habits, and very averse to the idle labor of walking. His legs were short, but sturdy in proportion to the weight they had to sustain; so that when erect he had not a little the appearance of a beer barrel on skids. His face, that infallible index of the mind, presented a vast expanse, unfurrowed by any of those lines and angles which disfigure the human countenance with what is termed expression. Two small grey eyes twinkled feebly in the midst, like two stars of lesser magnitude in a hazy firmament; and his full-fed cheeks, which seemed to have taken toll of every thing that went into his mouth, were curiously mottled and streaked with dusky red, like a spitzenberg apple.

His habits were as regular as his person. He daily took his four stated meals, appropriating exactly an hour to each; he smoked and doubted eight hours, and he slept the remaining twelve of the four and twenty. Such was the renowned Wouter Van Twiller—a true philosopher, for his mind was either elevated above, or tranquilly settled below, the cares and perplexities of this world. He had lived in it for years, without feeling the least curiosity to know whether the sun revolved round it, or it round the sun; and he had watched, for at least half a century, the smoke curling from his pipe to the ceiling, without once troubling his head with any of those numerous theories, by which a philosopher would have perplexed his brain, in accounting for its rising above the surrounding atmosphere.

In his council he presided with great state and solemnity. He sat in a huge chair of solid oak, hewn in the celebrated forest of the Hague, fabricated by an experienced timmerman of Amsterdam, and curiously carved about the arms and feet, into exact imitations of gigantic eagle's claws. Instead of a sceptre he swayed a long Turkish pipe, wrought with jasmin

and amber, which had been presented to a stadtholder of Holland, at the conclusion of a treaty with one of the petty Barbary powers. In this stately chair would he sit, and this magnificent pipe would he smoke, shaking his right knee with a constant motion, and fixing his eye for hours together upon a little print of Amsterdam, which hung in a black frame against the opposite wall of the council chamber. Nay, it has even been said, that when any deliberation of extraordinary length and intricacy was on the carpet, the renowned Wouter would shut his eyes for full two hours at a time, that he might not be disturbed by external objects—and at such times the internal commotion of his mind was evinced by certain regular guttural sounds, which his admirers declared were merely the noise of conflict, made by his contending doubts and opinions.

It is with infinite difficulty I have been enabled to collect these biographical anecdotes of the great man under consideration. The facts respecting him were so scattered and vague, and divers of them so questionable in point of authenticity, that I have had to give up the search after many, and decline the admission of still more, which would have tended to heighten the coloring of his portrait.

I have been the more anxious to delineate fully the person and habits of Wouter Van Twiller, from the consideration that he was not only the first, but also the best governor that ever presided over this ancient and respectable province; and so tranquil and benevolent was his reign, that I do not find throughout the whole of it, a single instance of any offender being brought to punishment—a most indubitable sign of a merciful governor, and a case unparalleled, excepting in the reign of the illustrious King Log, from whom, it is hinted, the renowned Van Twiller was a lineal descendant.

The very outset of the career of this excellent magistrate was distinguished by an example of legal acumen, that gave flattering presage of a wise and equitable administration. The morning after he had been installed in office, and at the moment that he was making his breakfast from a prodigious earthen dish, filled with milk and Indian pudding, he was interrupted by the appearance of Wandle Schoonhoven, a very important old burgher of New Amsterdam, who complained bitterly of one Barent Bleecker, inasmuch as he refused to come to a settlement of accounts, seeing that there was a heavy balance in

favor of the said Wandle. Governor Van Twiller, as I have already observed, was a man of few words; he was likewise a mortal enemy to multiplying writings—or being disturbed at his breakfast. Having listened attentively to the statement of Wandle Schoonhoven, giving an occasional grunt, as he shovelled a spoonful of Indian pudding into his mouth—either as a sign that he relished the dish, or comprehended the story—he called unto him his constable, and pulling out of his breeches pocket a huge jack-knife, dispatched it after the defendant as a summons, accompanied by his tobacco-box as a warrant.

This summary process was as effectual in those simple days as was the seal ring of the great Haroun Alraschid among the true believers. The two parties being confronted before him, each produced a book of accounts, written in a language and character that would have puzzled any but a High Dutch commentator, or a learned decipherer of Egyptian obelisks. The sage Wouter took them one after the other, and having poised them in his hands, and attentively counted over the number of leaves, fell straightway into a very great doubt, and smoked for half an hour without saying a word; at length, laying his finger beside his nose, and shutting his eyes for a moment, with the air of a man who has just caught a subtle idea by the tail, he slowly took his pipe from his mouth, puffed forth a column of tobacco smoke, and with marvellous gravity and solemnity pronounced—that having carefully counted over the leaves and weighed the books, it was found, that one was just as thick and as heavy as the other—therefore it was the final opinion of the court that the accounts were equally balanced—therefore Wandle should give Barent a receipt, and Barent should give Wandle a receipt—and the constable should pay the costs.

This decision being straightway made known, diffused general joy throughout New Amsterdam, for the people immediately perceived, that they had a very wise and equitable magistrate to rule over them. But its happiest effect was, that not another lawsuit took place throughout the whole of his administration—and the office of constable fell into such decay, that there was not one of those losel scouts known in the province for many years. I am the more particular in dwelling on this transaction, not only because I deem it one of the most sage and righteous judgments on record, and well worthy the attention of modern magistrates; but because it was a miraculous event in

the history of the renowned Wouter—being the only time he was ever known to come to a decision in the whole course of his life.

#### CHAPTER IV

Containing Further Particulars of the Golden Age, and What Constituted a Fine Lady and Gentleman in the Days of Walter the Doubter

In this dulcet period of my history, when the beautiful island of Manna-hata presented a scene, the very counterpart of those glowing pictures drawn of the golden reign of Saturn, there was, as I have before observed, a happy ignorance, an honest simplicity prevalent among its inhabitants, which, were I even able to depict, would be but little understood by the degenerate age for which I am doomed to write. Even the female sex, those arch innovators upon the tranquillity, the honesty, and gray-beard customs of society, seemed for a while to conduct themselves with incredible sobriety and comeliness.

Their hair, untortured by the abominations of art, was scrupulously pomatumed back from their foreheads with a candle, and covered with a little cap of quilted calico, which fitted exactly to their heads. Their petticoats of linsey-woolsey were striped with a variety of gorgeous dyes—though I must confess these gallant garments were rather short, scarce reaching below the knee; but then they made up in the number, which generally equalled that of the gentleman's small clothes; and what is still more praiseworthy, they were all of their own manufacture—of which circumstance, as may well be supposed, they were not a little vain.

These were the honest days in which every woman staid at home, read the Bible, and wore pockets—ay, and that too of a goodly size, fashioned with patchwork into many curious devices, and ostentatiously worn on the outside. These, in fact, were convenient receptacles, where all good housewives carefully stored away such things as they wished to have at hand; by which means they often came to be incredibly crammed—and I remember there was a story current when I was a boy that the Lady of Wouter Van Twiller once had occasion to empty her right pocket in search of a wooden ladle, when the contents filled a couple of corn baskets, and the utensil was discovered lying among some rubbish in one corner—but we must not give too much faith to all these stories;

the anecdotes of those remote periods being very subject to exaggeration.

Besides these notable pockets, they likewise wore scissors and pincushions suspended from their girdles by red ribands, or among the more opulent and showy classes, by brass, and even silver chains—indubitable tokens of thrifty housewives and industrious spinsters. I cannot say much in vindication of the shortness of the petticoats; it doubtless was introduced for the purpose of giving the stockings a chance to be seen, which were generally of blue worsted with magnificent red clocks—or perhaps to display a well-turned ankle, and a neat, though serviceable foot, set off by a high-heeled leathern shoe, with a large and splendid silver buckle. Thus we find that the gentle sex in all ages have shown the same disposition to infringe a little upon the laws of decorum, in order to betray a lurking beauty, or gratify an innocent love of finery.

From the sketch here given, it will be seen that our good grandmothers differed considerably in their ideas of a fine figure from their scantily dressed descendants of the present day. A fine lady, in those times, waddled under more clothes, even on a fair summer's day, than would have clad the whole bevy of a modern ball-room. Nor were they the less admired by the gentlemen in consequence thereof. On the contrary, the greatness of a lover's passion seemed to increase in proportion to the magnitude of its object—and a voluminous damsel arrayed in a dozen of petticoats, was declared by a Low Dutch sonneteer of the province to be radiant as a sunflower, and luxuriant as a full-blown cabbage. Certain it is, that in those days the heart of a lover could not contain more than one lady at a time; whereas the heart of a modern gallant has often room enough to accommodate half a dozen. The reason of which I conclude to be, that either the hearts of the gentlemen have grown larger, or the persons of the ladies smaller—this, however, is a question for physiologists to determine.

But there was a secret charm in these petticoats, which, no doubt, entered into the consideration of the prudent gallants. The wardrobe of a lady was in those days her only fortune; and she who had a good stock of petticoats and stockings, was as absolutely an heiress as is a Kamschatka damsel with a store of bearskins, or a Lapland belle with a plenty of reindeer. The ladies, therefore, were very anxious to display

these powerful attractions to the greatest advantage; and the best rooms in the house, instead of being adorned with caricatures of dame Nature, in water colors and needle work, were always hung round with abundance of homespun garments, the manufacture and the property of the females—a piece of laudable ostentation that still prevails among the heiresses of our Dutch villages.

The gentlemen, in fact, who figured in the circles of the gay world in these ancient times, corresponded, in most particulars, with the beauteous damsels whose smiles they were ambitious to deserve. True it is, their merits would make but a very inconsiderable impression upon the heart of a modern fair; they neither drove their carriages, nor sported their tandems, for as yet those gaudy vehicles were not even dreamt of—neither did they distinguish themselves by their brilliancy at the table, and their consequent rencontres with watchmen, for our forefathers were of too pacific a disposition to need those guardians of the night, every soul throughout the town being sound asleep before nine o'clock. Neither did they establish their claims to gentility at the expense of their tailors—for as yet those offenders against the pockets of society, and the tranquillity of all aspiring young gentlemen, were unknown in New Amsterdam; every good housewife made the clothes of her husband and family, and even the *goede vrouw* of Van Twiller himself thought it no disparagement to cut out her husband's linsey-woolsey galligaskins.

Not but what there were some two or three youngsters who manifested the first dawning of what is called fire and spirit; who held all labor in contempt; skulked about docks and market-places; loitered in the sunshine, squandered what little money they could procure at hustle-cap and chuck-farthing; swore, boxed, fought cocks, and raced their neighbor's horses—in short, who promised to be the wonder, the talk, and abomination of the town, had not their stylish career been unfortunately cut short by an affair of honor with a whipping-post.

Far other, however, was the truly fashionable gentleman of those days—his dress, which served for both morning and evening, street and drawing-room, was a linsey-woolsey coat, made, perhaps, by the fair hands of the mistress of his affections, and gallantly bedecked with abundance of large brass buttons—half a score of breeches heightened the proportions of his figure—his shoes were decorated by enormous

copper buckles—a low-crowned broad-rimmed hat overshadowed his burly visage, and his hair dangled down his back in a prodigious queue of eelskin.

Thus equipped, he would manfully sally forth with pipe in mouth to besiege some fair damsel's obdurate heart—not such a pipe, good reader, as that which Acis did sweetly tune in praise of his Galatea, but one of true Delft manufacture, and furnished with a charge of fragrant tobacco. With this would he resolutely set himself down before the fortress, and rarely failed, in the process of time, to smoke the fair enemy into a surrender, upon honorable terms.

Such was the happy reign of Wouter Van Twiller, celebrated in many a long forgotten song as the real golden age, the rest being nothing but counterfeit copper-washed coin. In that delightful period, a sweet and holy calm reigned over the whole province. The burgomaster smoked his pipe in peace—the substantial solace of his domestic cares, after her daily toils were done, sat soberly at the door, with her arms crossed over her apron of snowy white, without being insulted with ribald street walkers or vagabond boys—those unlucky urchins who do so infest our streets, displaying, under the roses of youth, the thorns and briars of iniquity. Then it was that the lover with ten breeches, and the damsel with petticoats of half a score, indulged in all the innocent endearments of virtuous love without fear and without reproach; for what had that virtue to fear, which was defended by a shield of good linsey-woolseys, equal at least to the seven bull hides of the invincible Ajax?

Ah blissful, and never to be forgotten age! when every thing was better than it has ever been since, or ever will be again—when Buttermilk Channel was quite dry at low water—when the shad in the Hudson were all salmon, and when the moon shone with a pure and resplendent whiteness, instead of that melancholy yellow light which is the consequence of her sickening at the abominations she every night witnesses in this degenerate city!

Happy would it have been for New Amsterdam could it always have existed in this state of blissful ignorance and lowly simplicity, but alas! the days of childhood are too sweet to last! Cities, like men, grow out of them in time, and are doomed alike to grow into the bustle, the cares, and miseries of the world. Let no man congratulate himself, when he beholds the child of his bosom or the city of his birth increasing in magnitude and importance—let the history of

his own life teach him the dangers of the one, and this excellent little history of Manna-hata convince him of the calamities of the other.

FROM BOOK IV

Containing the Chronicles of the Reign  
of William the Testy<sup>31</sup>

CHAPTER I

Showing the Nature of History in General, Containing Farthermore the Universal Acquirements of William the Testy, and how a Man May Learn so Much as to Render Himself Good for Nothing

When the lofty Thucydides<sup>32</sup> is about to enter upon his description of the plague<sup>33</sup> that desolated Athens, one of his modern commentators assures the reader, that the history is now going to be exceeding solemn, serious, and pathetic; and hints, with that air of chuckling gratulation with which a good dame<sup>20</sup> draws forth a choice morsel from a cupboard to regale a favorite, that this plague will give his history a most agreeable variety.

In like manner did my heart leap within me, when I came to the dolorous dilemma of Fort Goed Hoop,<sup>34</sup> which I at once perceived to be the fore-runner of a series of great events and entertaining disasters. Such are the true subjects for the historic pen. For what is history, in fact, but a kind of Newgate calendar,<sup>35</sup> a register of the crimes and miseries<sup>30</sup> that man has inflicted on his fellow-man? It is a huge libel on human nature, to which we industriously add page after page, volume after volume, as if we were building up a monument to the honor, rather than the infamy of our species. If we turn over the pages of these chronicles that man has written of himself, what are the characters dignified by the appellation of great, and held up to the admiration of posterity? Tyrants, robbers, conquerors, renowned only for the magnitude of their misdeeds, and the stupendous<sup>40</sup> wrongs and miseries they have inflicted on mankind—warriors, who have hired themselves to the trade of blood, not from motives of virtuous patriotism, or

to protect the injured and defenceless, but merely to gain the vaunted glory of being adroit and successful in massacring their fellow-beings! What are the great events that constitute a glorious era?—The fall of empires—the desolation of happy countries—splendid cities smoking in their ruins—the proudest works of art tumbled in the dust—the shrieks and groans of whole nations ascending unto heaven!

It is thus the historian may be said to thrive on the<sup>10</sup> miseries of mankind, like birds of prey which hover over the field of battle, to fatten on the mighty dead. It was observed by a great projector<sup>36</sup> of inland lock navigation, that rivers, lakes, and oceans, were only formed to feed canals.—In like manner I am tempted to believe, that plots, conspiracies, wars, victories, and massacres, are ordained by Providence only as food for the historian.

It is a source of great delight to the philosopher, in studying the wonderful economy of nature, to trace the mutual dependencies of things, how they are created reciprocally for each other, and how the most noxious and apparently unnecessary animal has its uses. Thus those swarms of flies, which are so often execrated as useless vermin, are created for the sustenance of spiders—and spiders, on the other hand, are evidently made to devour flies. So those heroes who have been such scourges to the world, were bounteously provided as themes for the poet and historian, while the poet and the historian were destined to record the achievements of heroes!

These, and many similar reflections, naturally arose in my mind, as I took up my pen to commence the reign of William Kieft: for now the stream of our history, which hitherto has rolled in a tranquil current, is about to depart forever from its peaceful haunts, and brawl through many a turbulent and rugged scene.

As some sleek ox, sunk in the rich repose of a clover-field, dozing and chewing the cud, will bear repeated blows before it raises itself, so the province of Nieuw Nederlandts, having waxed fat under the drowsy reign of the Doubter, needed cuffs and kicks to rouse it into action. The reader will now witness the manner in which a peaceful community advances towards a state of war; which is apt to be like the approach of a horse to a drum, with much prancing and little progress, and too often with the wrong end foremost.

<sup>36</sup> Promoter.

<sup>31</sup> That is, William Kieft (1602–47), actually the fifth director-general of New Netherland.

<sup>32</sup> Thucydides (460?–400 B.C.), Greek historian.

<sup>33</sup> The description of the plague occurs in Book II of Thucydides' history of the Peloponnesian War.

<sup>34</sup> A Dutch outpost established in 1633 near the present city of Hartford, Connecticut.

<sup>35</sup> A record of famous English crimes and criminals.

Wilhelmus Kieft, who, in 1634,<sup>37</sup> ascended the gubernatorial chair (to borrow a favorite though clumsy appellation of modern phrascologists), was of a lofty descent, his father being inspector of wind-mills in the ancient town of Saardam,<sup>38</sup> and our hero, we are told, when a boy, made very curious investigations into the nature and operation of these machines, which was one reason why he afterwards came to be so ingenious a governor. His name, according to the most authentic etymologists, was a corruption of *Kyver*; that is to say, a *wrangler* or *scolder*; and expressed the characteristic of his family, which, for nearly two centuries, had kept the windy town of Saardam in hot water, and produced more tartars and brimstones than any ten families in the place; and so truly did he inherit this family peculiarity, that he had not been a year in the government of the province, before he was universally denominated William the Testy. His appearance answered to his name. He was a brisk, wiry, waspish little old gentleman, <sup>20</sup> such a one as may now and then be seen stumping about our city in a broad-skirted coat with huge buttons, a cocked hat stuck on the back of his head, and a cane as high as his chin. His face was broad, but his features were sharp, his cheeks were scorched into a dusky red, by two fiery little gray eyes; his nose turned up, and the corners of his mouth turned down, pretty much like the muzzle of an irritable pug-dog.

I have heard it observed by a profound adept in <sup>30</sup> human physiology, that if a woman waxes fat with the progress of years, her tenure of life is somewhat precarious, but if haply she withers as she grows old, she lives forever. Such promised to be the case with William the Testy, who grew tough in proportion as he dried. He had withered, in fact, not through the process of years, but through the tropical fervor of his soul, which burnt like a vehement rush-light in his bosom, inciting him to incessant broils and bickerings. Ancient traditions speak much of his <sup>40</sup> learning, and of the gallant inroads he had made into the dead languages, in which he had made captive a host of Greek nouns and Latin verbs, and brought off rich booty in ancient saws and apothegms; which he was wont to parade in his public harangues, as a triumphant general of yore, his *spolia opima*.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Although the date is disputed, 1638 is probably the correct one.

<sup>38</sup> Modern Zaandam, near Amsterdam in northern Holland.

<sup>39</sup> The richest spoils.

Of metaphysics, he knew enough to confound all hearers and himself into the bargain. In logic, he knew the whole family of syllogisms and dilemmas, and was so proud of his skill that he never suffered even a self-evident fact to pass unargued. It was observed, however, that he seldom got into an argument without getting into a perplexity, and then into a passion with his adversary for not being convinced gratis.

He had, moreover, skirmished smartly on the frontiers of several of the sciences, was fond of experimental philosophy, and prided himself upon inventions of all kinds. His abode, which he had fixed at a Bowerie<sup>40</sup> or country-seat at a short distance from the city, just at what is now called Dutch-street, soon abounded with proofs of his ingenuity: patent smokejacks<sup>41</sup> that required a horse to work them; Dutch ovens that roasted meat without fire; caits that went before the horses, weathercocks that turned against the wind, and other wrong-headed contrivances that astonished and confounded all beholders. The house, too, was beset with paralytic cats and dogs, the subjects of his experimental philosophy; and the yelling and yelping of the latter unhappy victims of science, while aiding in the pursuit of knowledge, soon gained for the place the name of "Dog's Misery," by which it continues to be known even at the present day.

It is in knowledge as in swimming; he who flounders and splashes on the surface, makes more noise, and attracts more attention, than the pearl-diver who quietly dives in quest of treasures to the bottom. The vast acquirements of the new governor were the theme of marvel among the simple burghers of New Amsterdam; he figured about the place as learned a man as a Bonze<sup>42</sup> at Peking, who has mastered one half of the Chinese alphabet, and was unanimously pronounced a "universal genius!"

I have known in my time many a genius of this stamp; but, to speak my mind freely, I never knew one who, for the ordinary purposes of life, was worth his weight in straw. In this respect, a little sound judgment and plain common sense is worth all the sparkling genius that ever wrote poetry or invented

<sup>40</sup> A street paralleling Broadway on the east in lower New York City.

<sup>41</sup> Spits for roasting meat, made to be rotated in the fireplace. This account of his inventive zeal is a "dig" at Jefferson, who also indulged his inventive ingenuity.

<sup>42</sup> A Buddhist priest.

theories. Let us see how the universal acquirements of William the Testy aided him in the affairs of government

## CHAPTER II

### How William the Testy Undertook to Conquer by Proclamation—How He Was a Great Man Abroad, But a Little Man in His Own House

No sooner had this bustling little potentate been blown by a whiff of fortune into the seat of government than he called his council together to make them a speech on the state of affairs

Caius Gracchus,<sup>43</sup> it is said, when he harangued the Roman populace, modulated his tone by an oratorical flute or pitchpipe, Wilhelmus Kieft, not having such an instrument at hand, availed himself of that musical organ or trump which nature has implanted in the midst of a man's face, in other words, he preluded his address by a sonorous blast of the nose; a preliminary flourish<sup>44</sup> much in vogue among public orators.

He then commenced by expressing his humble sense of his utter unworthiness of the high post to which he had been appointed; which made some of the simple burghers wonder why he undertook it, not knowing that it is a point of etiquette with a public orator never to enter upon office without declaring himself unworthy to cross the threshold. He then proceeded in a manner highly classic and erudite to speak of government generally, and of the governments of ancient Greece in particular; together with the wars of Rome and Carthage, and the rise and fall of sundry outlandish empires which the worthy burghers had never read nor heard of. Having thus, after the manner of your learned orator, treated of things in general, he came by a natural, roundabout transition, to the matter in hand, namely, the daring aggressions of the Yankees.

As my readers are well aware of the advantage a potentate has of handling his enemies as he pleases in his speeches and bulletins, where he has the talk all on his own side, they may rest assured that William the Testy did not let such an opportunity escape of giving the Yankees what is called "a taste of his quality." In speaking of their inroads into the

territories of their High Mightinesses, he compared them to the Gauls who desolated Rome, the Goths and Vandals who overran the fairest plains of Europe; but when he came to speak of the unparalleled audacity with which they of Weathersfield<sup>45</sup> had advanced their patches up to the very walls of Fort Good Hoop, and threatened to smother the garison in onions, tears of rage started into his eyes, as though he nosed the very offence in question.

Having thus wrought up his tale to a climax, he assumed a most belligerent look, and assured the council that he had devised an instrument, potent in its effects, and which he trusted would soon drive the Yankees from the land. So saying, he thrust his hand into one of the deep pockets of his broad-skirted coat and drew forth, not an infernal machine, but an instrument in writing, which he laid with great emphasis upon the table.

The burghers gazed at it for a time in silent awe, as a wary housewife does at a gun, fearful it may go off half-cocked. The document in question had a sinister look, it is true, it was crabbed in text, and from a broad red ribbon dangled the great seal of the province, about the size of a buckwheat pancake. Still, after all, it was but an instrument in writing. Herein, however, existed the wonder of the invention. The document in question was a PROCLAMATION,<sup>46</sup> ordering the Yankees to depart instantly from the territories of their High Mightinesses under pain of suffering all the forfeitures and punishments in such case made and provided. It was on the moral effect of this formidable instrument that Wilhelmus Kieft calculated; pledging his valor as a governor that, once fulminated against the Yankees, it would, in less than two months, drive every mother's son of them across the borders.

The council broke up in perfect wonder, and nothing was talked of for some time among the old men and women of New Amsterdam but the vast genius of the governor, and his new and cheap mode of fighting by proclamation.

As to Wilhelmus Kieft, having dispatched his proclamation to the frontiers, he put on his cocked hat and corduroy small-clothes, and mounting a tall raw-boned charger, trotted out to his rural retreat of Dog's Misery. Here, like the good Numa, he reposed

<sup>43</sup> Caius Gracchus (159-121 B.C.), Roman statesman and orator.

<sup>44</sup> Probably a satirical reference to Jefferson's first Inaugural Address.

<sup>45</sup> Now Wethersfield, a suburb of Hartford.

<sup>46</sup> A reference to Jefferson's effort to stop the British blockade, to curb Napoleon's "Continental system," and to order European belligerents to cease interfering with American commerce.

from the toils of state, taking lessons in government, not from the nymph Egeria, but from the honored wife of his bosom, who was one of that class of females sent upon the earth a little after the flood, as a punishment for the sins of mankind, and commonly known by the appellation of *knowing women*. In fact, my duty as an historian obliges me to make known a circumstance which was a great secret at the time, and consequently was not a subject of scandal at more than half the tea-tables in New Amsterdam, <sup>10</sup> but which, like many other great secrets, has leaked out in the lapse of years—and this was, that Wilhelmus the Testy, though one of the most potent little men that ever breathed, yet submitted at home to a species of government, neither laid down in Aristotle nor Plato, in short, it partook of the nature of a pure, unmixed tyranny, and is familiarly denominated *petticoat government*—An absolute sway, which, although exceedingly common in these modern days, was very rare among the ancients, if we <sup>20</sup> may judge from the rout made about the domestic economy of honest Socrates, which is the only ancient case on record.

The great Kieft, however, warded off all the sneers and sarcasms of his particular friends, who are ever ready to joke with a man on sore points of the kind, by alleging that it was a government of his own election, to which he submitted through choice, adding at the same time a profound maxim which he had found in an ancient author, that “he who would <sup>30</sup> aspire to *govern*, should first learn to *obey*.”

### CHAPTER III

In Which Are Recorded the Sage Projects of a Ruler of Universal Genius—The Art of Fighting by Proclamation—And How That the Valiant Jacobus Van Curlet Came to Be Foully Dishonored at Fort Goed Hoop

Never was a more comprehensive, a more expeditious, or, what is still better, a more economical measure devised, than this of defeating the Yankees by proclamation—an expedient, likewise, so gentle and humane, there were ten chances to one in favor of its succeeding,—but then there was one chance to ten that it would not succeed—as the ill-natured fates would have it, that single chance carried the day! The proclamation was perfect in all its parts, well constructed, well written, well scaled, and well

published—all that was wanting to insure its effect was, that the Yankees should stand in awe of it, but, provoking to relate, they treated it with the most absolute contempt, applied it to an unseemly purpose, and thus did the first warlike proclamation come to a shameful end—a fate which I am credibly informed has befallen but too many of its successors.

So far from abandoning the country, those varlets continued their encroachments, squatting along the green banks of the Vaische river, and founding Hartford, Stamford, New Haven, and other border towns. I have already shown how the onion patches of Pyquag were an eyesore to Jacobus Van Curlet and his garrison, but now these moss-troopers increased in their atrocities, kidnapping hogs, impounding horses, and sometimes grievously rib-roasting their owners. Our worthy forefathers could scarcely stir abroad without danger of being outjockeyed in horse-flesh, or taken in in bargaining; while, in their absence, some daring Yankee peddler would penetrate to their household, and nearly ruin the good housewives with tin-ware and wooden bowls.

I am well aware of the perils which environ me in this part of my history. While raking, with curious hand but pious heart, among the mouldering remains of former days, anxious to draw therefrom the honey of wisdom, I may fare somewhat like that valiant worthy, Samson, who, in meddling with the carcass of a dead lion, drew a swarm of bees about his ears. Thus, while narrating the many misdeeds of the Yanokie or Yankee race, it is ten chances to one but I offend the morbid sensibilities of certain of their unreasonable descendants, who may fly out and raise such a buzzing about this unlucky head of mine, that I shall need the tough hide of an Achilles, or an Orlando Furioso,<sup>47</sup> to protect me from their stings.

Should such be the case, I should deeply and sincerely lament—not my misfortune in giving offence—but the wrong-headed perverseness of an ill-natured generation, in taking offence at any thing I say. That their ancestors did use my ancestors ill is true, and I am very sorry for it. I would, with all my heart, the fact were otherwise; but as I am recording the sacred events of history, I'd not bate one nail's breadth of the honest truth, though I were sure the whole edition of my work would be bought up

<sup>47</sup> The mad Roland of an epic by that name, by Ariosto (1474–1533), an Italian poet.



and burnt by the common hangman of Connecticut. And in sooth, now that these testy gentlemen have drawn me out, I will make bold to go farther, and observe that this is one of the grand purposes for which we impartial historians are sent into the world—to redress wrongs and render justice on the heads of the guilty. So that, though a powerful nation may wrong its neighbors with temporary impunity, yet sooner or later an historian springs up, who wreaks ample chastisement on it in return.

Thus these moss-troopers of the east little thought, I'll warrant it, while they were harassing the inoffensive province of Nieuw Nederlands, and driving its unhappy governor to his wit's end, that an historian would ever arise, and give them their own, with interest. Since, then, I am but performing my bounden duty as an historian, in avenging the wrongs of our revered ancestors, I shall make no further apology, and, indeed, when it is considered that I have all these ancient borderers of the east in my <sup>20</sup> power, and at the mercy of my pen, I trust that it will be admitted I conduct myself with great humanity and moderation.

It was long before William the Testy could be persuaded that his much vaunted war measure was ineffectual, on the contrary, he flew in a passion whenever it was doubted, swearing that though slow in operating, yet when it once began to work, it would soon purge the land of these invaders. When convinced, at length, of the truth, like a shrewd <sup>30</sup> physician, he attributed the failure to the quantity, not the quality of the medicine, and resolved to double the dose. He fulminated, therefore, a second proclamation more vehement than the first, forbidding all intercourse with these Yankee intruders; ordering the Dutch burghers on the frontiers to buy none of their pacing horses, measly pork, apple sweetmeats, Weathersfield onions, or wooden bowls, and to furnish them with no supplies of gin, gingerbread, or sourkrout.

Another interval elapsed, during which the last proclamation was as little regarded as the first, and the non-intercourse was especially set at naught by the young folks of both sexes, if we may judge by the active bundling which took place along the borders.

At length one day the inhabitants of New Amsterdam were aroused by a furious barking of dogs, great and small, and beheld, to their surprise, the whole

garrison of Fort Goed Hoop straggling into town all tattered and wayworn, with Jacobus Van Culet at their head, bringing the melancholy intelligence of the capture of Fort Goed Hoop by the Yankees.

The fate of this important fortress is an impressive warning to all military commanders. It was neither carried by storm nor famine, nor was it undermined, nor bombarded, nor set on fire by red-hot shot, but was taken by a stratagem no less singular than effective, <sup>10</sup> and which can never fail of success, whenever an opportunity occurs of putting it in practice.

It seems that the Yankees had received intelligence that the garrison of Jacobus Van Culet had been reduced nearly one-eighth by the death of two of his most corpulent soldiers, who had overcaten themselves on fat salmon caught in the Varsche river. A secret expedition was immediately set on foot to surprise the fortress. The crafty enemy knowing the habits of the garrison to sleep soundly after they had eaten their dinners and smoked their pipes, stole upon them at the noontide of a sultry summer's day, and surprised them in the midst of their slumbers.

In an instant the flag of their High Mightinesses was lowered, and the Yankee standard elevated in its stead, being a dried codfish, by way of a spiced eagle. A strong garrison was appointed, of long-sided, hard-fisted Yankees, with Weathersfield onions for cockades and feathers. As to Jacobus Van Culet and his <sup>men</sup>, they were seized by the nape of the neck, conducted to the gate, and one by one dismissed with a kick in the crupper, as Charles XII. dismissed the heavy-bottomed Russians at the battle of Narva, Jacobus Van Culet receiving two kicks in consideration of his official dignity.

#### CHAPTER IV

<sup>40</sup> Containing the Fearful Wrath of William the Testy, and the Alarm of New Amsterdam—How the Governor Did Strongly Fortify the City—Of the Rise of Antony the Trumpeter, and the Windy Addition to the Armorial Bearings of New Amsterdam

Language cannot express the awful ire of William the Testy on hearing of the catastrophe at Fort Goed Hoop. For three good hours his rage was too great for words, or rather the words were too great for him, (being a very small man,) and he was nearly choked by the misshapen, nine-cornered Dutch oaths and

epithets which crowded at once into his gullet. At length his words found vent, and for three days he kept up a constant discharge, anathematizing the Yankees, man, woman, and child, for a set of dieven, schobbejacken, deugenieten, twistzockeren, blaes-kaken, looscn-schalken, kakken-bedden, and a thousand other names, of which, unfortunately for posterity, history does not make mention. Finally, he swore that he would have nothing more to do with such a squatting, bundling, guessing, questioning, swapping, pumpkin-eating, molasses-daubing, shingle-splitting, cider-watering, horse-jockeying, notion-peddling crew—that they might stay at Fort Goed Hoop and rot, before he would dirty his hands by attempting to drive them away, in proof of which he ordered the new-raised troops to be marched forthwith into winter quarters, although it was not as yet quite midsummer. Great despondency now fell upon the city of New Amsterdam. It was feared that the conquerors of Fort Goed Hoop, flushed with victory<sup>20</sup> and apple-brandy, might march on to the capital, take it by storm, and annex the whole province to Connecticut. The name of Yankee became as terrible among the Nieuw Nederlanders as was that of Gaul among the ancient Romans, insomuch that the good wives of the Manhattoes used it as a bugbear wherewith to frighten their unruly children.

Everybody clamored around the governor, imploring him to put the city in a complete posture of defence, and he listened to their clamors. Nobody<sup>30</sup> could accuse William the Testy of being idle in time of danger, or at any other time. He was never idle, but then he was often busy to very little purpose. When a youngling he had been impressed with the words of Solomon, "Go to the ant, thou sluggard, observe her ways and be wise," in conformity to which he had ever been of a restless, ant-like turn, hurrying hither and thither, nobody knew why or wherefore, busying himself about small matters with an air of great importance and anxiety, and toiling<sup>40</sup> at a grain of mustard-seed in the full conviction that he was moving a mountain. In the present instance, he called in all his inventive powers to his aid, and was continually pondering over plans, making diagrams, and worrying about with a troop of workmen and projectors at his heels. At length, after a world of consultation and contrivance, his plans of defence ended in rearing a great flag-staff in the centre of the fort, and perching a wind-mill on each bastion.

These warlike preparations in some measure allayed the public alarm, especially after an additional means of securing the safety of the city had been suggested by the governor's lady. It has already been hinted in this most authentic history, that in the domestic establishment of William the Testy "the gray mare was the better horse;" in other words, that his wife, "ruled the roast," and, in governing the governor, governed the province, which might thus be said to be under petticoat government.

Now it came to pass, that about this time there lived in the Manhattoes a jolly, robustious trumpeter, named Antony Van Corlecar, famous for his long wind; and who, as the story goes, could twang so potently upon his instrument, that the effect upon all within hearing was like that ascribed to the Scotch bagpipe when it sings right lustily i' the nose.

This sounder of brass was moreover a lusty bachelor, with a pleasant, burly visage, a long nose, and huge whiskers. He had his little *bowerie*, or retreat in the country, where he led a roystering life, giving dances to the wives and daughters of the burghers of the Manhattoes, insomuch that he became a prodigious favorite with all the women, young and old. He is said to have been the first to collect that famous toll levied on the fair sex at Kissing Bridge, on the highway to Hellgate.\*

To this sturdy bachelor the eyes of all the women were turned in this time of darkness and peril, as the very man to second and carry out the plans of defence of the governor. A kind of petticoat council was forthwith held at the government house, at which the governor's lady presided, and this lady, as has been hinted, being all potent with the governor, the result of these councils was the elevation of Antony the Trumpeter to the post of commandant of windmills and champion of New Amsterdam.

The city being thus fortified and garrisoned, it would have done one's heart good to see the governor snapping his fingers and fidgeting with delight, as the trumpeter strutted up and down the ramparts twanging defiance to the whole Yankee race, as does a modern editor to all the principalities and powers on the other side of the Atlantic. In the hands of Antony Van Corlecar this windy instrument appeared

\* The bridge here mentioned by Mr. Knickerbocker still exists; but it is said that the toll is seldom collected nowadays, excepting on sleighing-parties, by the descendants of the patriarchs, who still preserve the traditions of the city.

to him as potent as the horn of the paladin Astolpho, or even the more classic horn of Alceto, nay, he had almost the temerity to compare it with the rams' horns celebrated in holy writ, at the very sound of which the walls of Jericho fell down.

Be all this as it may, the apprehensions of hostilities from the east gradually died away. The Yankees made no further invasion, nay, they declared they had only taken possession of Fort Goed Hoop as being erected within their territories. So far from manifesting hostility, they continued to throng to New Amsterdam with the most innocent countenances imaginable, filling the market with their notions, being as ready to trade with the *Nederlanders* as ever—and not a whit more prone to get to the windward of them in a bargain.

The old wives of the Manhattos who took tea with the governor's lady attributed all this affected moderation to the awe inspired by the military preparations of the governor, and the windy prowess of *Antony the Trumpeter*.

There were not wanting illiberal minds, however, who sneered at the governor for thinking to defend his city as he governed it, by mere wind; but William Kieft was not to be jeered out of his wind-mills—he had seen them perched upon the ramparts of his native city of Saardam, and was persuaded they were connected with the great science of defence, nay, so much piqued was he by having them made a matter of ridicule, that he introduced them into the arms of the city, where they remain to this day, quartered with the ancient beaver of the Manhattos, an emblem and memento of his policy.

I must not omit to mention that certain wise old burghers of the Manhattos, skilful in expounding signs and mysteries, after events have come to pass, consider this early intrusion of the wind-mill into the escutcheon of our city, which before had been wholly occupied by the beaver, as portentous of its after fortune, when the quiet Dutchman would be elbowed aside by the enterprising Yankee, and patient industry overtopped by windy speculation.

## CHAPTER VII

### Growing Discontents of New Amsterdam Under the Government of William the Testy

It has been remarked by the observant writer of the *Stuyvesant manuscript*, that under the administration

of William Kieft the disposition of the inhabitants of New Amsterdam experienced an essential change, so that they became very meddling and factious. The unfortunate propensity of the little governor to experiment and innovation, and the frequent exacerbations of his temper, kept his council in a continual worry, and the council being to the people at large what yeast or leaven is to a batch, they threw the whole community in a ferment; and the people at large being to the city what the mind is to the body, the unhappy commotions they underwent operated most disastrously upon New Amsterdam—inasmuch that, in certain of their paroxysms of consternation and perplexity, they begat several of the most crooked, distorted, and abominable streets, lanes, and alleys, with which this metropolis is disfigured.

The fact was, that about this time, the community, like Balaam's ass, began to grow more enlightened than its rider, and to show a disposition for what is called "self government." This restive propensity was first evinced in certain popular meetings, in which the burghers of New Amsterdam met to talk and smoke over the complicated affairs of the province, gradually obfuscating themselves with politics and tobacco-smoke. Hither resorted those idlers and squires of low degree who hang loose on society and are blown about by every wind of doctrine. Cobblers abandoned their stalls to give lessons on political economy; blacksmiths suffered their fires to go out while they stirred up the fires of faction; and even tailors, though said to be the ninth parts of humanity, neglected their own measures to criticize the measures of government.<sup>48</sup>

Strange! that the science of government, which seems to be so generally understood, should invariably be denied to the only one called upon to exercise it. Not one of the politicians in question, but, take his word for it, could have administered affairs ten times better than William the Testy.

Under the instructions of these political oracles the good people of New Amsterdam soon became exceedingly enlightened; and, as a matter of course, exceedingly discontented. They gradually found out the fearful error in which they had indulged, of thinking themselves the happiest people in creation; and were

<sup>48</sup> Irving's Federalism is here discernible in his satirization of the expedients of self-government, political societies, and beclouded democratic opinions which, in his Federalist mind, were associated with Jeffersonian democracy.

convinced that, all circumstances to the contrary notwithstanding, they were a very unhappy, deluded, and consequently ruined people!

We are naturally prone to discontent, and avacious after imaginary causes of lamentation. Like lubberly monks we belabor our own shoulders, and take a vast satisfaction in the music of our own groans. Nor is this said by way of paradox, daily experience shows the truth of these observations. It is almost impossible to elevate the spirits of a man 10 groaning under ideal calamities, but nothing is easier than to render him wretched, though on the pinnacle of felicity, as it would be an Herculean task to hoist a man to the top of a steeple, though the nearest child could topple him off thence.

I must not omit to mention that these popular meetings were generally held at some noted tavern, these public edifices possessing what in modern times are thought the true fountains of political inspiration. The ancient Greeks deliberated upon a matter when 20 drunk, and reconsidered it when sober. Mob politicians in modern times dislike to have two minds upon a subject, so they both deliberate and act when drunk; by this means a world of delay is spared; and as it is universally allowed that a man when drunk sees double, it follows conclusively that he sees twice as well as his sober neighbors.

#### CHAPTER VIII

Of the Edict of William the Testy Against Tobacco 30  
—of the Pipe Plot, and the Rise of Feuds and Parties

Wilhelmus Kieft, as has already been observed, was a great legislator on a small scale, and had a microscopic eye in public affairs. He had been greatly annoyed by the factious meeting of the good people of New Amsterdam, but, observing that on these occasions the pipe was ever in their mouth, he began to think that the pipe was at the bottom of the affair, and that there was some mysterious affinity between 40 politics and tobacco smoke. Determined to strike at the root of the evil, he began, forthwith, to rail at tobacco, as a noxious, nauseous weed; filthy in all its uses; and as to smoking he denounced it as a heavy tax upon the public pocket; a vast consumer of time, a great encourager of idleness, and a deadly bane to the prosperity and morals of the people. Finally he issued an edict, prohibiting the smoking of tobacco throughout the New Netherlands. Ill-fated Kieft! Had

he lived in the present age and attempted to check the unbounded license of the press, he could not have stuck more sorely upon the sensibilities of the million. The pipe, in fact, was the great organ of reflection and deliberation of the New Netherlander. It was his constant companion and solace—was he gay, he smoked, was he sad, he smoked, his pipe was never out of his mouth, it was a part of his physiognomy, without it his best friends would not know him. Take away his pipe? You might as well take away his nose!

The immediate effect of the edict of William the Testy was a popular commotion. A vast multitude armed with pipes and tobacco-boxes, and an immense supply of ammunition, sat themselves down before the governor's house, and fell to smoking with tremendous violence. The testy William issued forth like a wrathful spider, demanding the reason of this lawless fumigation. The sturdy rioters replied by 10 lolling back in their seats, and puffing away with redoubled fury, raising such a murky cloud that the governor was fain to take refuge in the interior of his castle.

A long negotiation ensued through the medium of Antony the Trumpeter. The governor was at first wrathful and unyielding, but was gradually smoked into terms. He concluded by permitting the smoking of tobacco, but he abolished the fair long pipes used in the days of Wouter Van Twiller, denoting ease, 30 tranquillity, and sobriety of deportment; these he condemned as incompatible with the despatch of business, in place whereof he substituted little capacious short pipes, two inches in length, which, he observed, could be stuck in one corner of the mouth, or twisted in the hat-band; and would never be in the way. Thus ended this alarming insurrection, which was long known by the name of The Pipe Plot, and which, it has been somewhat quaintly observed, did end, like most plots and seditions, in 40 mere smoke.

But mark, oh, reader! the deplorable evils which did afterwards result. The smoke of these villainous little pipes, continually ascending in a cloud about the nose, penetrated into and befogged the cerebellum; dried up all the kindly moisture of the brain, and rendered the people who used them as vaporish and testy as the governor himself. Nay, what is worse, from being goodly, burly, sleek-conditioned men, they became, like our Dutch yeomanry who smoke short

pipes, a lantern-jawed, smoke-dried, leathern-lidded race

Nor was this all. From this fatal schism in tobacco pipes we may date the rise of parties in the *Nieuw Nederlands*. The rich and self-important burghers who had made their fortunes, and could afford to be lazy, adhered to the ancient fashion, and formed a kind of aristocracy known as the *Long Pipes*, while the lower order, adopting the reform of William Kieft as more convenient in their handicraft employ-<sup>10</sup>ments, were branded with the plebeian name of *Short Pipes*.

A third party sprang up, headed by the descendants of Robert Chewit, the companion of the great Hudson. These discarded pipes altogether and took to chewing tobacco, hence they were called *Quids*, an appellation since given to those political mongrels, which sometimes spring up between two great parties, as a mule is produced between a horse and an ass.<sup>49</sup>

And here I would note the great benefit of party distinctions in saving the people at large the trouble of thinking. Hesiod divides mankind into three classes, those who think for themselves, those who think as others think, and those who do not think at all. The second class comprises the great mass of society; for most people require a set creed and a file-leader. Hence the origin of party which means a large body of people, some few of whom think, and all the rest talk. The former take the lead and discipline the latter, prescribing what they must say, what they must approve; what they must hoot at, whom they must support, but, above all, whom they must hate, for no one can be a right good partisan, who is not a thorough-going hater.

The enlightened inhabitants of the Manhattoes, therefore, being divided into parties, were enabled to hate each other with great accuracy. And now the great business of politics went bravely on, the long

pipes and short pipes assembling in separate beer-houses, and smoking at each other with implacable vehemence, to the great support of the state and profit of the tavern-keepers. Some, indeed, went so far as to bespatter their adversaries with those odorous little words which smell so strong in the Dutch language; believing, like true politicians, that they served their party, and glorified themselves in proportion as they bewrayed their neighbors. But, however they might differ among themselves, all parties agreed in abusing the governor, seeing that he was not a governor of their choice, but appointed by others to rule over them.

Unhappy William Kieft! exclaims the sage writer of the Stuyvesant manuscript, doomed to contend with enemies too knowing to be entrapped, and to reign over a people too wise to be governed. All his foreign expeditions were baffled and set at naught by the all-pervading Yankees, all his home measures<sup>20</sup> were canvassed and condemned by "numerous and respectable meetings" of pot-house politicians.

In the multitude of counsellors, we are told, there is safety; but the multitude of counsellors was a continual source of perplexity to William Kieft. With a temperament as hot as an old radish, and a mind subject to perpetual whirlwinds and tornadoes, he never failed to get into a passion with every one who undertook to advise him. I have observed, however, that your passionate little men, like small boats with large sails, are easily upset or blown out of their course; so was it with William the Testy, who was prone to be carried away by the last piece of advice blown into his ear. The consequence was, that, though a projector of the first class, yet, by continually changing his projects, he gave none a fair trial; and by endeavoring to do every thing, he in sober truth did nothing.

In the mean time, the sovereign people got into the saddle, showed themselves, as usual, unmerciful riders, spurring on the little governor with harangues and petitions, and thwarting him with memorials and reproaches, in much the same way as holy-day apprentices manage an unlucky devil of a hack-horse—so that Wilhelmus Kieft was kept at a worry or a gallop throughout the whole of his administration.

<sup>49</sup> Out of the "Pipe Plot" (possibly an expansion of the consequences of Kieft's tax on tobacco) grew the three political parties: the Long Pipes (Federalists), the Short Pipes (Anti-Federalists), and the Quids ("political mongrels"), the mob who follow blindly first one, then the other.

The entire episode of the Long and Short Pipes is, of course, an adaptation of Swift's Big- and Little-Endians in *Gulliver's Travels*.

FROM

*The Sketch Book*<sup>50</sup>The Author's Account of Himself<sup>51</sup>

*I am of this mind with Homer, that as the snail that crept out of her shell was turned ere-soon into a toad, and thereby was forced to make a stool to sit on, so the traveller that straggleth from his owne country is in a short time transformed into so monstrous a shape, that he is faine to alter his mansion with his manners, and to live where he cannot where he would.* LYL<sup>y</sup>'S EUPHUES.<sup>52</sup>

I was always fond of visiting new scenes, and observing strange characters and manners. Even when a mere child I began my travels, and made many tours of discovery into foreign parts and unknown regions of my native city, to the frequent alarm of my parents, and the emolument of the town-crier. As I grew into boyhood, I extended the range of my observations. My holiday afternoons were spent in rambles about the surrounding country. I made myself familiar with all its places famous in history or fable. I knew every spot where a murder or robbery had been committed, or a ghost seen. I visited the neighboring vallages, and added greatly to my stock of knowledge, by noting their habits and customs, and conversing with their sages and great men. I even journeyed one long summer's day to the summit of the most distant hill, whence I stretched my eye over many a mile of terra incognita,<sup>53</sup> and was astonished to find how vast a globe I inhabited.

This rambling propensity strengthened with my years. Books of voyages and travels became my passion, and in devouring their contents, I neglected the regular exercises of the school. How wistfully would I wander about the pier-heads in fine weather, and watch the parting ships, bound to distant climes—with what longing eyes would I gaze after their lessening sails, and waft myself in imagination to the ends of the earth!

Further reading and thinking, though they brought

<sup>50</sup> Published originally in seven installments, or numbers, at irregular intervals from May 15, 1819, to September 13, 1820, by C. S. Van Winkle of New York. The first four numbers were reissued, in England, in February, 1820, by John Miller. When Miller failed shortly after, John Murray was induced by Scott to undertake all future publications of the work.

<sup>51</sup> This, after a short "Prospectus," formed the first part of No. I.

<sup>52</sup> From *Euphues and His England* (1580), by John Lyly (1553?-1606).

<sup>53</sup> Unexplored or unknown region.

this vague inclination into more reasonable bounds, only served to make it more decided. I visited various parts of my own country; and had I been merely a lover of fine scenery, I should have felt little desire to seek elsewhere its gratification, for on no country have the charms of nature been more prodigally lavished. Her mighty lakes, like oceans of liquid silver, her mountains, with their bright aerial tints; her valleys, teeming with wild fertility, her tremendous cataracts, thundering in their solitudes; her boundless plains, waving with spontaneous verdure; her broad deep rivers, rolling in solemn silence to the ocean, her trackless forests, where vegetation puts forth all its magnificence, her skies, kindling with the magic of summer clouds and glorious sunshine,—no, never need an American look beyond his own country for the sublime and beautiful of natural scenery.

But Europe held forth the charms of storied and poetical association. There were to be seen the masterpieces of art, the refinements of highly-cultivated society, the quaint peculiarities of ancient and local custom. My native country was full of youthful promise: Europe was rich in the accumulated treasures of age. Her very ruins told the history of times gone by, and every mouldering stone was a chronicle. I longed to wander over the scenes of renowned achievement—to tread, as it were, in the footsteps of antiquity—to loiter about the ruined castle—to meditate on the falling tower—to escape, in short, from the commonplace realities of the present, and lose myself among the shadowy grandeurs of the past.

I had, beside all this, an earnest desire to see the great men of the earth. We have, it is true, our great men in America—not a city but has an ample share of them. I have mingled among them in my time, and been almost withered by the shade into which they cast me; for there is nothing so baleful to a small man as the shade of a great one, particularly the great man of a city. But I was anxious to see the great men of Europe; for I had read in the works of various philosophers, that all animals degenerated in America, and man among the number.<sup>54</sup> A great man of

<sup>54</sup> Several Europeans, among them the Comte de Buffon (1707-85) and Dr. Samuel Johnson (1709-84), had said as much.

Europe, thought I, must therefore be as superior to a great man of America, as a peak of the Alps to a highland of the Hudson, and in this idea I was confirmed, by observing the comparative importance and swelling magnitude of many English travellers among us, who, I was assured, were very little people in their own country. I will visit this land of wonders, thought I, and see the gigantic race from which I am degenerated.

It has been either my good or evil lot to have my 10 roving passion gratified. I have wandered through different countries, and witnessed many of the shifting scenes of life. I cannot say that I have studied them with the eye of a philosopher, but rather with the sauntering gaze with which humble lovers of the picturesque stroll from the window of one print-shop to another, caught sometimes by the delineations of beauty, sometimes by the distortions of caricature, and sometimes by the loveliness of landscape. As it is the fashion for modern tourists to travel pencil in 20 hand, and bring home their portfolios filled with sketches, I am disposed to get up a few for the entertainment of my friends. When, however, I look over the hints and memorandums I have taken down for the purpose, my heart almost fails me at finding how my idle humor has led me aside from the great objects studied by every regular traveller who would make a book. I fear I shall give equal disappointment with an unlucky landscape painter, who had travelled on the continent, but, following the bent of his 30 vagrant inclination, had sketched in nooks, and corners, and by-places. His sketch-book was accordingly crowded with cottages, and landscapes, and obscure ruins; but he had neglected to paint St. Peter's, or the Coliseum, the cascade of Terni,<sup>55</sup> or the bay of Naples; and had not a single glacier or volcano in his whole collection.

<sup>55</sup> Artificial waterfalls in the Apennines.

<sup>56</sup> In a note at the end of this story Irving wrote: "The foregoing tale, one would suspect, had been suggested to Mr. Knickerbocker by a little German superstition about the Emperor Frederick *der Rothbart*, and the Kypphauser [sic] mountain the subjoined note, however, which he had appended to the tale, shows that it is an absolute fact, narrated with his usual fidelity.

"The story of Rip Van Winkle may seem incredible to many, but nevertheless I give it my full belief, for I know the vicinity of our old Dutch settlements to have been very subject to marvellous events and appearances. Indeed, I have heard many stranger stories than this, in the villages along the Hudson; all of which were too well authenticated to admit of a doubt. I have even talked with Rip Van Winkle myself, who, when last I saw him, was a very venerable old man, and so perfectly rational and consistent on every other point, that I think no conscientious person could refuse to take this into the bargain; nay, I have

## Rip Van Winkle<sup>56</sup>

A POSTHUMOUS WRITING  
OF DIEDRICH KNICKERBOCKER

By Woden, God of Saxons,<sup>57</sup>

From whence comes Wensday, that is Wodensday

Truth is a thing that ever I will keep

Unto thylke day in which I creep into

My sepulchre—

CARTWRIGHT<sup>58</sup>

(The following Tale was found among the papers of the late Diedrich Knickerbocker, an old gentleman of New York, who was very curious in the Dutch history of the province, and the manners of the descendants from its primitive settlers. His historical researches, however, did not lie so much among books as among men, for the former are lamentably scanty on his favorite topics, whereas he found the old burghers, and still more their wives, rich in that legendary lore, so invaluable to true history. Whenever, therefore, he happened upon a genuine Dutch family, snugly shut up in its low-roofed farmhouse, under a spreading sycamore, he looked upon it as a little clasped volume of black-letter, and studied it with the zeal of a book-worm.

The result of all these researches was a history of the province during the reign of the Dutch governors, which he published some years since. There have been various opinions as to the literary character of his work, and, to tell the truth, it is not a whit better than it should be. Its chief merit is its scrupulous accuracy, which indeed was a little questioned on its first appearance, but has since been completely established; and it is now admitted into all historical collections, as a book of unquestionable authority.

The old gentleman died shortly after the publication of his work, and now that he is dead and gone, it cannot do much harm to his memory to say that his time might have been much better employed in weightier labors. He, however, was apt to ride his hobby his own way; and though it did now and then kick up the dust a little in the eyes of his neighbors, and grieve the spirit of some friends, for whom he felt the truest deference and affection, yet his

seen a certificate on the subject taken before a country justice and signed with a cross, in the justice's own handwriting. The story, therefore, is beyond the possibility of doubt. D.K." [Irving's note.]

This is obviously banter. But why Irving should misdirect the reader and refer to the story of Emperor Frederick the Redbeard is not clear, unless he tried to cover up his tracks. This tale is decidedly not the source of "Rip Van Winkle." However, the tale which immediately precedes it (in Otmar's collection of German tales, which Irving knew) is the story which he adapted and in some of its parts merely paraphrased. It is the story of Peter Klaus the Goatherd. This story Irving took over bodily, expanded, reinvested in a Knickerbocker locale, and substituted American characters; and the result is the first American short story. For the details of this adaptation, see Pochmann, Henry A., "Irving's German Sources in *The Sketch Book*," *Studies in Philology*, XXVII, ii (July, 1930), 477-507, notably 489-94, where relevant portions of the two tales are printed in parallel columns to indicate the extent of Irving's indebtedness.

<sup>57</sup> Teutonic god of storms and battles

<sup>58</sup> William Cartwright (1610-43), English poet.

errors and follies are remembered "more in sorrow than in anger," and it begins to be suspected, that he never intended to injure or offend. But however his memory may be appreciated by critics, it is still held dear by many folk, whose good opinion is well worth having, particularly by certain biscuit-bakers, who have gone so far as to imprint his likeness on their new-year cakes; and have thus given him a chance for immortality, almost equal to the being stamped on a Waterloo Medal,<sup>59</sup> or a Queen Anne's Farthing<sup>60</sup>.)

Whoever has made a voyage up the Hudson must remember the Kaatskill mountains. They are a dismembered branch of the great Appalachian family, and are seen away to the west of the river, swelling up to a noble height, and lording it over the surrounding country. Every change of season, every change of weather, indeed, every hour of the day, produces some change in the magical hues and shapes of these mountains, and they are regarded by all the good wives, far and near, as perfect barometers. When the weather is fair and settled, they are clothed in blue and purple, and print their bold outlines on the clear evening sky, but, sometimes, when the rest of the landscape is cloudless, they will gather a hood of gray vapors about their summits, which, in the last rays of the setting sun, will glow and light up like a crown of glory.

At the foot of these fairy mountains, the voyager may have descried the light smoke curling up from a village, whose shingle-roofs gleam among the trees, just where the blue tints of the upland melt away into the fresh green of the nearer landscape. It is a little village, of great antiquity, having been founded by some of the Dutch colonists, in the early times of the province, just about the beginning of the government of the good Peter Stuyvesant. (may he rest in peace!) and there were some of the houses of the original settlers standing within a few years, built of small yellow bricks brought from Holland, having latticed windows and gable fronts, surmounted with weather-cocks.

In that same village, and in one of these very houses (which, to tell the precise truth, was sadly time-worn and weather-beaten), there lived many years since, while the country was yet a province of Great Britain, a simple good-natured fellow, of the name of Rip Van Winkle. He was a descendant of

the Van Winkles who figured so gallantly in the chivalrous days of Peter Stuyvesant, and accompanied him to the siege of Fort Christina. He inherited, however, but little of the martial character of his ancestors. I have observed that he was a simple good-natured man; he was, moreover, a kind neighbor, and an obedient hen-pecked husband. Indeed, to the latter circumstance might be owing that meekness of spirit which gained him such universal popularity; for those men are most apt to be obsequious and conciliating abroad, who are under the discipline of shrews at home. Their tempers, doubtless, are rendered pliant and malleable in the fiery furnace of domestic tribulation, and a certain lecture is worth all the sermons in the world for teaching the virtues of patience and long-suffering. A termagant wife may, therefore, in some respects, be considered a tolerable blessing, and if so, Rip Van Winkle was thrice blessed.

Certain it is, that he was a great favorite among all the good wives of the village, who, as usual, with the amiable sex, took his part in all family squabbles; and never failed, whenever they talked those matters over in their evening gossipings, to lay all the blame on Dame Van Winkle. The children of the village, too, would shout with joy whenever he approached. He assisted at their sports, made their playthings, taught them to fly kites and shoot marbles, and told them long stories of ghosts, witches, and Indians. Whenever he went dodging about the village, he was surrounded by a troop of them, hanging on his skirts, clambering on his back, and playing a thousand tricks on him with impunity, and not a dog would bark at him throughout the neighborhood.

The great error in Rip's composition was an insuperable aversion to all kinds of profitable labor. It could not be from the want of assiduity or perseverance, for he would sit on a wet rock, with a rod as long and heavy as a Tartar's lance, and fish all day without a murmur, even though he should not be encouraged by a single nibble. He would carry a fowling-piece on his shoulder for hours together, trudging through woods and swamps, and up hill and down dale, to shoot a few squirrels or wild pigeons. He would never refuse to assist a neighbor even in the roughest toil, and was a foremost man at all country frolics for husking Indian corn, or building stone-fences; the women of the village, too, used to employ him to run their errands, and to do such little odd

<sup>59</sup> A medal struck off to commemorate the defeat of Napoleon on June 18, 1815.

<sup>60</sup> A copper coin minted during the reign of Queen Anne (1702-14).



jobs as their less obliging husbands would not do for them. In a word Rip was ready to attend to anybody's business but his own, but as to doing family duty, and keeping his farm in order, he found it impossible.

In fact, he declared it was of no use to work on his farm, it was the most pestilent little piece of ground in the whole country, every thing about it went wrong, and would go wrong, in spite of him. His fences were continually falling to pieces, his cow would either go astray, or get among the cabbages, weeds were sure to grow quicker in his fields than anywhere else, the rain always made a point of setting in just as he had some outdoor work to do, so that though his patrimonial estate had dwindled away under his management, acre by acre, until there was little more left than a mere patch of Indian corn and potatoes, yet it was the worst conditioned farm in the neighborhood.

His children, too, were as ragged and wild as if they belonged to nobody. His son Rip, an urchin begotten in his own likeness, promised to inherit the habits, with the old clothes of his father. He was generally seen trooping like a colt at his mother's heels, equipped in a pair of his father's cast-off galligaskins,<sup>61</sup> which he had much ado to hold up with one hand, as a fine lady does her train in bad weather.

Rip Van Winkle, however, was one of those happy mortals, of foolish, well-oiled dispositions, who take the world easy, eat white bread or brown, whichever can be got with least thought or trouble, and would rather starve on a penny than work for a pound. If left to himself, he would have whistled life away in perfect contentment, but his wife kept continually dinning in his ears about his idleness, his carelessness, and the ruin he was bringing on his family. Morning, noon, and night, her tongue was incessantly going, and every thing he said or did was sure to produce a torrent of household eloquence. Rip had but one way of replying to all lectures of the kind, and that, by frequent use, had grown into a habit. He shrugged his shoulders, shook his head, cast up his eyes, but said nothing. This, however, always provoked a fresh volley from his wife; so that he was fain to draw off his forces, and take to the outside of the house—the only side which, in truth, belongs to a hen-pecked husband.

<sup>61</sup> Loose or baggy trousers.

Rip's sole domestic adherent was his dog Wolf, who was as much hen-pecked as his master, for Dame Van Winkle regarded them as companions in idleness, and even looked upon Wolf with an evil eye, as the cause of his master's going so often astray. True it is, in all points of spirit befitting an honorable dog, he was as courageous an animal as ever scoured the woods—but what courage can withstand the enduring and all-besetting terrors of a woman's tongue? The moment Wolf entered the house his crest fell, his tail drooped to the ground, or curled between his legs, he sneaked about with a gallows air, casting many a sidelong glance at Dame Van Winkle, and at the least flourish of a broomstick or ladle, he would fly to the door with yelping precipitation.

Times grew worse and worse with Rip Van Winkle as years of matrimony rolled on, a tart temper never mellows with age, and a sharp tongue is the only edged tool that grows keener with constant use. For a long while he used to console himself, when driven from home, by frequenting a kind of perpetual club of the sages, philosophers, and other idle personages of the village, which held its sessions on a bench before a small inn, designated by a rubicund portrait of His Majesty George the Third. Here they used to sit in the shade through a long lazy summer's day, talking listlessly over village gossip, or telling endless sleepy stories about nothing. But it would have been worth any statesman's money to have heard the profound discussions that sometimes took place, when by chance an old newspaper fell into their hands from some passing traveller. How solemnly they would listen to the contents, as drawled out by Derrick Van Bummel, the schoolmaster, a dapper learned little man, who was not to be daunted by the most gigantic word in the dictionary; and how sagely they would deliberate upon public events some months after they had taken place.

The opinions of this junta were completely controlled by Nicholas Vedder, a patriarch of the village, and landlord of the inn, at the door of which he took his seat from morning till night, just moving sufficiently to avoid the sun and keep in the shade of a large tree, so that the neighbors could tell the hour by his movements as accurately as by a sun-dial. It is true he was rarely heard to speak, but smoked his pipe incessantly. His adherents, however (for every great man has his adherents), perfectly understood him, and knew how to gather his opinions. When

any thing that was read or related displeased him, he was observed to smoke his pipe vehemently, and to send forth short, frequent and angry puffs, but when pleased, he would inhale the smoke slowly and tranquilly, and emit it in light and placid clouds; and sometimes, taking the pipe from his mouth, and letting the fragrant vapor curl about his nose, would gravely nod his head in token of perfect approbation.

From even this stronghold the unlucky Rip was at length routed by his termagant wife, who would suddenly break in upon the tranquillity of the assemblage and call the members all to naught, nor was that august personage, Nicholas Vedder himself, sacred from the daring tongue of this terrible virago, who charged him outright with encouraging her husband in habits of idleness

Poor Rip was at last reduced almost to despair; and his only alternative, to escape from the labor of the farm and clamor of his wife, was to take gun in hand and stroll away into the woods. Here he would sometimes seat himself at the foot of a tree, and share the contents of his wallet with Wolf, with whom he sympathized as a fellow-sufferer in persecution. "Poor Wolf," he would say, "thy mistress leads thee a dog's life of it; but never mind, my lad, whilst I live thou shalt never want a friend to stand by thee!" Wolf would wag his tail, look wistfully in his master's face, and if dogs can feel pity I verily believe he reciprocated the sentiment with all his heart.

In a long ramble of the kind on a fine autumnal day, Rip had unconsciously scrambled to one of the highest parts of the Kaatskill mountains. He was after his favorite sport of squirrel shooting, and the still solitudes had echoed and re-echoed with the reports of his gun. Panting and fatigued, he threw himself, late in the afternoon, on a green knoll, covered with mountain herbage, that crowned the brow of a precipice. From an opening between the trees he could overlook all the lower country for many a mile of rich woodland. He saw at a distance the lordly Hudson, far, far below him, moving on its silent but majestic course, with the reflection of a purple cloud, or the sail of a lagging bark, here and there sleeping on its glassy bosom, and at last losing itself in the blue highlands.

On the other side he looked down into a deep mountain glen, wild, lonely, and shagged, the bottom filled with fragments from the impending cliffs, and scarcely lighted by the reflected rays of the setting

sun. For some time Rip lay musing on this scene, evening was gradually advancing, the mountains began to throw their long blue shadows over the valleys, he saw that it would be dark long before he could reach the village, and he heaved a heavy sigh when he thought of encountering the terrors of Dame Van Winkle.

As he was about to descend, he heard a voice from a distance, hallooing, "Rip Van Winkle! Rip Van Winkle!" He looked round, but could see nothing but a crow winging its solitary flight across the mountain. He thought his fancy must have deceived him, and turned again to descend, when he heard the same cry through the still evening air, "Rip Van Winkle! Rip Van Winkle!"—at the same time Wolf bristled up his back, and giving a low growl, skulked to his master's side, looking fearfully down into the glen. Rip now felt a vague apprehension stealing over him; he looked anxiously in the same direction, and perceived a strange figure slowly toiling up the rocks, and bending under the weight of something he carried on his back. He was surprised to see any human being in this lonely and unfrequented place, but supposing it to be some one of the neighborhood in need of his assistance, he hastened down to yield it.

On nearer approach he was still more surprised at the singularity of the stranger's appearance. He was a short square-built old fellow, with thick bushy hair, and a grizzled beard. His dress was of the antique Dutch fashion—a cloth jerkin stapped round the waist—several pair of breeches, the outer one of ample volume, decorated with rows of buttons down the sides, and bunches at the knees. He bore on his shoulder a stout keg, that seemed full of liquor, and made signs for Rip to approach and assist him with the load. Though rather shy and distrustful of this new acquaintance, Rip complied with his usual alacrity, and mutually relieving one another, they clambered up a narrow gully, apparently the dry bed of a mountain torrent. As they ascended, Rip every now and then heard long rolling peals, like distant thunder, that seemed to issue out of a deep ravine, or rather cleft, between lofty rocks, toward which their rugged path conducted. He paused for an instant, but supposing it to be the muttering of one of those transient thunder-showers which often take place in mountain heights, he proceeded. Passing through the ravine, they came to a hollow, like a small amphitheatre, surrounded by perpendicular precipices, over

the brinks of which impending trees shot their branches, so that you only caught glimpses of the azure sky and the bright evening cloud. During the whole time Rip and his companion had labored on in silence; for though the former marvelled greatly what could be the object of carrying a keg of liquor up this wild mountain, yet there was something strange and incomprehensible about the unknown, that inspired awe and checked familiarity.

On entering the amphitheatre, new objects of wonder presented themselves. On a level spot in the centre was a company of odd-looking personages playing at nine-pins. They were dressed in a quaint outlandish fashion, some wore short doublets, others jerkins, with long knives in their belts, and most of them had enormous breeches, of similar style with that of the guide's. Their visages, too, were peculiar: one had a large beard, broad face, and small piggish eyes: the face of another seemed to consist entirely of nose, and was surmounted by a white sugar-loaf hat, set off with a little red cock's tail. They all had beards, of various shapes and colors. There was one who seemed to be the commander. He was a stout old gentleman, with a weather-beaten countenance; he wore a laced doublet, broad belt and hanger, high crowned hat and feather, red stockings, and high-heeled shoes, with roses<sup>63</sup> in them. The whole group reminded Rip of the figures in an old Flemish painting, in the parlor of Dominie Van Shaick, the village parson, and which had been brought over from Holland at the time of the settlement.

What seemed particularly odd to Rip was, that though these folks were evidently amusing themselves, yet they maintained the gravest faces, the most mysterious silence, and were, withal, the most melancholy party of pleasure he had ever witnessed. Nothing interrupted the stillness of the scene but the noise of the balls, which, whenever they were rolled, echoed along the mountains like rumbling peals of thunder.

As Rip and his companion approached them, they suddenly desisted from their play, and stared at him with such fixed statue-like gaze, and such strange, uncouth, lack-lustre countenances, that his heart turned within him, and his knees smote together. His companion now emptied the contents of the keg into large flagons, and made signs to him to wait upon the company. He obeyed with fear and trem-

bling, they quaffed the liquor in profound silence, and then returned to their game.

By degrees Rip's awe and apprehension subsided. He even ventured, when no eye was fixed upon him, to taste the beverage, which he found had much of the flavor of excellent Hollands.<sup>64</sup> He was naturally a thirsty soul, and was soon tempted to repeat the draught. One taste provoked another, and he reiterated his visits to the flagon so often that at length his senses were overpowered, his eyes swam in his head, his head gradually declined, and he fell into a deep sleep.

On waking, he found himself on the green knoll whence he had first seen the old man of the glen. He rubbed his eyes—it was a bright sunny morning. The birds were hopping and twittering among the bushes, and the eagle was wheeling aloft, and breasting the pure mountain breeze. "Surely," thought Rip, "I have not slept here all night." He recalled the occurrences before he fell asleep. The strange man with a keg of liquor—the mountain ravine—the wild retreat among the rocks—the wobegone party at nine-pins—the flagon—"Oh! that flagon! that wicked flagon!" thought Rip—"what excuse shall I make to Dame Van Winkle!"

He looked round for his gun, but in place of the clean well-oiled fowling-piece, he found an old fire-lock lying by him, the barrel incrustated with rust, the lock falling off, and the stock worm-eaten. He now suspected that the grave roysters<sup>64</sup> of the mountain had put a trick upon him, and, having dosed him with liquor, had robbed him of his gun. Wolf, too, had disappeared, but he might have strayed away after a squirrel or partridge. He whistled after him and shouted his name, but all in vain; the echoes repeated his whistle and shout, but no dog was to be seen.

He determined to revisit the scene of the last evening's gambol, and if he met with any of the party, to demand his dog and gun. As he rose to walk, he found himself stiff in the joints, and wanting in his usual activity. "These mountain beds do not agree with me," thought Rip, "and if this frolic should lay me up with a fit of the rheumatism, I shall have a blessed time with Dame Van Winkle." With some difficulty he got down into the glen: he found the gully up which he and his companion had ascended

<sup>63</sup> Dutch gin.

<sup>64</sup> Roisterers or revelers.

<sup>62</sup> Rosettes.

the preceding evening, but to his astonishment a mountain stream was now foaming down it, leaping from rock to rock, and filling the glen with babbling murmurs. He, however, made shift to scramble up its sides, working his toilsome way through thickets of birch, sassafras, and witch-hazel, and sometimes tripped up or entangled by the wild grapevines that twisted their coils or tendrils from tree to tree, and spread a kind of network in his path.

At length he reached to where the ravine had opened through the cliffs to the amphitheatre; but no traces of such opening remained. The rocks presented a high impenetrable wall over which the torrent came tumbling in a sheet of feathery foam, and fell into a broad deep basin, black from the shadows of the surrounding forest. Here, then, poor Rip was brought to a stand. He again called and whistled after his dog, he was only answered by the cawing of a flock of idle crows, sporting high in air about a dry tree that overhung a sunny precipice, and who, secure in their elevation, seemed to look down and scoff at the poor man's perplexities. What was to be done? the morning was passing away, and Rip felt famished for want of his breakfast. He grieved to give up his dog and gun; he dreaded to meet his wife; but it would not do to starve among the mountains. He shook his head, shouldered the rusty firelock, and, with a heart full of trouble and anxiety, turned his steps homeward.

As he approached the village he met a number of people, but none whom he knew, which somewhat surprised him, for he had thought himself acquainted with every one in the country round. Their dress, too, was of a different fashion from that to which he was accustomed. They all stared at him with equal marks of surprise, and whenever they cast their eyes upon him, invariably stroked their chins. The constant recurrence of this gesture induced Rip, involuntarily, to do the same, when, to his astonishment, he found his beard had grown a foot long!

He had now entered the skirts of the village. A troop of strange children ran at his heels, hooting after him, and pointing at his gray beard. The dogs, too, not one of which he recognized for an old acquaintance, barked at him as he passed. The very village was altered; it was larger and more populous. There were rows of houses which he had never seen before, and those which had been his familiar haunts had disappeared. Strange names were over the doors

—strange faces at the windows—every thing was strange. His mind now misgave him, he began to doubt whether both he and the world around him were not bewitched. Surely this was his native village, which he had left but the day before. There stood the Kaatskill mountains—there ran the silver Hudson at a distance—there was every hill and dale precisely as it had always been—Rip was sorely perplexed—"That flagon last night," thought he, "has addled my poor head sadly!"

It was with some difficulty that he found the way to his own house, which he approached with silent awe, expecting every moment to hear the shrill voice of Dame Van Winkle. He found the house gone to decay—the roof fallen in, the windows shattered, and the doors off the hinges. A half-starved dog that looked like Wolf was skulking about it. Rip called him by name, but the cur snarled, showed his teeth, and passed on. This was an unkind cut indeed—"My very dog," sighed poor Rip, "has forgotten me!"

He entered the house, which, to tell the truth, Dame Van Winkle had always kept in neat order. It was empty, forlorn, and apparently abandoned. This desolateness overcame all his connubial fears—he called loudly for his wife and children—the lonely chambers rang for a moment with his voice, and then all again was silence.

He now hurried forth, and hastened to his old resort, the village inn—but it too was gone. A large rickety wooden building stood in its place, with great gaping windows, some of them broken and mended with old hats and petticoats, and over the door was painted, "the Union Hotel, by Jonathan Doolittle." Instead of the great tree that used to shelter the quiet little Dutch inn of yore, there now was reared a tall naked pole, with something on the top that looked like a red night-cap, and from it was fluttering a flag, on which was a singular assemblage of stars and stripes—all this was strange and incomprehensible. He recognized on the sign, however, the ruby face of King George, under which he had smoked so many a peaceful pipe; but even this was singularly metamorphosed. The red coat was changed for one of blue and buff, a sword was held in the hand instead of a sceptre, the head was decorated with a cocked hat, and underneath was painted in large characters, GENERAL WASHINGTON.

There was, as usual, a crowd of folk about the door, but none that Rip recollected. The very character of

the people seemed changed. There was a busy, bustling, disputatious tone about it, instead of the accustomed phlegm and drowsy tranquillity. He looked in vain for the sage Nicholas Vedder, with his broad face, double chin, and fair long pipe, uttering clouds of tobacco-smoke instead of idle speeches, or Van Bummel, the schoolmaster, doling forth the contents of an ancient newspaper. In place of these, a lean, bilious-looking fellow, with his pockets full of handbills, was haranguing vehemently about rights of citizens—elections—members of congress—liberty—Bunker's Hill—heroes of seventy-six—and other words, which were a perfect Babylonish jargon<sup>65</sup> to the bewildered Van Winkle.

The appearance of Rip, with his long grizzled beard, his rusty fowling-piece, his uncouth dress, and an army of women and children at his heels, soon attracted the attention of the tavern politicians. They crowded round him, eyeing him from head to foot with great curiosity. The orator bustled up to him, and, drawing him partly aside, inquired "on which side he voted?" Rip stared in vacant stupidity. Another short but busy little fellow pulled him by the arm, and, rising on tiptoe, inquired in his ear, "Whether he was Federal or Democrat?" Rip was equally at a loss to comprehend the question, when a knowing, self-important old gentleman, in a sharp cocked hat, made his way through the crowd, putting them to the right and left with his elbows as he passed, and planting himself before Van Winkle, with one arm akimbo, the other resting on his cane, his keen eyes and sharp hat penetrating, as it were, into his very soul, demanded in an austere tone, "what brought him to the election with a gun on his shoulder, and a mob at his heels, and whether he meant to breed a riot in the village?"—"Alas! gentlemen," cried Rip, somewhat dismayed, "I am a poor quiet man, a native of the place, and a loyal subject of the king, God bless him!"

Here a general shout burst from the by-standers—<sup>40</sup> "A tory! a tory! a spy! a refugee! hustle him! away with him!" It was with great difficulty that the self-important man in the cocked hat restored order; and, having assumed a tenfold austerity of brow, demanded again of the unknown culprit, what he came there for, and whom he was seeking? The poor man humbly assured him that he meant no harm, but

<sup>65</sup> An allusion to the confusion of tongues, Genesis 11:1-9; unintelligible jargon.

merely came there in search of some of his neighbors, who used to keep about the tavern.

"Well—who are they?—name them."

Rip bethought himself a moment, and inquired, "Where's Nicholas Vedder?"

There was a silence for a little while, when an old man replied, in a thin piping voice, "Nicholas Vedder! why, he is dead and gone these eighteen years! There was a wooden tombstone in the church-yard that used to tell all about him, but that's rotten and gone too."

"Where's Brom Dutcher?"

"Oh, he went off to the army in the beginning of the war; some say he was killed at the storming of Stony Point—others say he was drowned in a squall at the foot of Antony's Nose. I don't know—he never came back again."

"Where's Van Bummel, the schoolmaster?"

"He went off to the wars too, was a great militia general, and is now in congress."

Rip's heart died away at hearing of these sad changes in his home and friends, and finding himself thus alone in the world. Every answer puzzled him too, by treating of such enormous lapses of time, and of matters which he could not understand. war—congress—Stony Point,—he had no courage to ask after any more friends, but cried out in despair, "Does nobody here know Rip Van Winkle?"

"Oh, Rip Van Winkle!" exclaimed two or three, "Oh, to be sure! that's Rip Van Winkle yonder, leaning against the tree."

Rip looked, and beheld a precise counterpart of himself, as he went up the mountain: apparently as lazy, and certainly as ragged. The poor fellow was now completely confounded. He doubted his own identity, and whether he was himself or another man. In the midst of his bewilderment, the man in the cocked hat demanded who he was, and what was his name?

"God knows," exclaimed he, at his wit's end; "I'm not myself—I'm somebody else—that's me yonder—no—that's somebody else got into my shoes—I was myself last night, but I fell asleep on the mountain, and they've changed my gun, and every thing's changed, and I'm changed, and I can't tell what's my name, or who I am!"

The by-standers began now to look at each other, nod, wink significantly, and tap their fingers against their foreheads. There was a whisper, also, about

securing the gun, and keeping the old fellow from doing mischief, at the very suggestion of which the self-important man in the cocked hat retired with some precipitation. At this critical moment a fresh comely woman pressed through the throng to get a peep at the gray-bearded man. She had a chubby child in her arms, which, frightened at his looks, began to cry. "Hush, Rip," cried she, "hush, you little fool, the old man won't hurt you." The name of the child, the air of the mother, the tone of her voice, all awakened a train of recollections in his mind. "What is your name, my good woman?" asked he.

"Judith Gardenier."

"And your father's name?"

"Ah, poor man, Rip Van Winkle was his name, but it's twenty years since he went away from home with his gun, and never has been heard of since—his dog came home without him, but whether he shot himself, or was carried away by the Indians, nobody can tell. I was then but a little girl."

Rip had but one question more to ask, but he put it with a faltering voice.

"Where's your mother?"

"Oh, she too had died but a short time since; she broke a blood-vessel in a fit of passion at a New-England peddler."

There was a drop of comfort, at least, in this intelligence. The honest man could contain himself no longer. He caught his daughter and her child in his arms. "I am your father!" cried he—"Young Rip Van Winkle once—old Rip Van Winkle now!—Does nobody know poor Rip Van Winkle?"

All stood amazed, until an old woman, tottering out from among the crowd, put her hand to her brow, and peering under it in his face for a moment, exclaimed, "Sure enough! it is Rip Van Winkle—it is himself! Welcome home again, old neighbor—Why, where have you been these twenty long years?"

Rip's story was soon told, for the whole twenty years had been to him but as one night. The neighbors stared when they heard it; some were seen to wink at each other, and put their tongues in their cheeks; and the self-important man in the cocked hat, who, when the alarm was over, had returned to the field, screwed down the corners of his mouth, and shook his head—upon which there was a general shaking of the head throughout the assemblage.

It was determined, however, to take the opinion

of old Peter Vanderdonk, who was seen slowly advancing up the road. He was a descendant of the historian<sup>66</sup> of that name, who wrote one of the earliest accounts of the province. Peter was the most ancient inhabitant of the village, and well versed in all the wonderful events and traditions of the neighborhood. He recollected Rip at once, and corroborated his story in the most satisfactory manner. He assured the company that it was a fact, handed down from his ancestor the historian, that the Kaatskill mountains had always been haunted by strange beings. That it was affirmed that the great Hendrick Hudson, the first discoverer of the river and country, kept a kind of vigil there every twenty years, with his crew of the Half-moon, being permitted in this way to revisit the scenes of his enterprise, and keep a guardian eye upon the river, and the great city called by his name.<sup>67</sup> That his father had once seen them in their old Dutch dresses playing at nine-pins in a hollow of the mountain, and that he himself had heard, one summer afternoon, the sound of their balls, like distant peals of thunder.

To make a long story short, the company broke up, and returned to the more important concerns of the election. Rip's daughter took him home to live with her, she had a snug, well-furnished house, and a stout cheery farmer for a husband, whom Rip recollected for one of the urchins that used to climb upon his back. As to Rip's son and heir, who was the ditto of himself, seen leaning against the tree, he was employed to work on the farm, but evinced an hereditary disposition to attend to any thing else but his business.

Rip now resumed his old walks and habits; he soon found many of his former cronies, though all rather the worse for the wear and tear of time, and preferred making friends among the rising generation, with whom he soon grew into great favor.

Having nothing to do at home, and being arrived at that happy age when a man can be idle with impunity, he took his place once more on the bench at the inn door, and was revered as one of the patriarchs of the village, and a chronicle of the old times "before the war." It was some time before he

<sup>66</sup> Adriaen Van der Donck (1620–55?), author of a description of New Netherland, published in Amsterdam in 1655.

<sup>67</sup> The town of Hudson, on the east bank of the river, across from the Catskills, was a busy shipping center in Irving's time. Henry Hudson, erroneously called Hendrick (?–1611), sailed up the river in 1609.

could get into the regular track of gossip, or could be made to comprehend the strange events that had taken place during his torpor. How that there had been a revolutionary war—that the country had thrown off the yoke of old England—and that, instead of being a subject of His Majesty George the Third, he was now a free citizen of the United States. Rip, in fact, was no politician, the changes of states and empires made but little impression on him; but there was one species of despotism under which he 10 had long groaned, and that was—petticoat government. Happily that was at an end; he had got his neck out of the yoke of matrimony, and could go in and out whenever he pleased, without dreading the tyranny of Dame Van Winkle. Whenever her name was mentioned, however, he shook his head, shrugged his shoulders, and cast up his eyes, which might pass either for an expression of resignation to his fate, or joy at his deliverance.

He used to tell his story to every stranger that 20 arrived at Mr. Doolittle's hotel. He was observed, at first, to vary on some points every time he told it, which was, doubtless, owing to his having so recently awaked. It at last settled down precisely to the tale I have related, and not a man, woman, or child in the neighborhood, but knew it by heart. Some always pretended to doubt the reality of it, and insisted that Rip had been out of his head, and that this was one point on which he always remained flighty. The old Dutch inhabitants, however, almost universally gave 30 it full credit. Even to this day they never hear a thunderstorm of a summer afternoon about the Kaatskill, but they say Hendrick Hudson and his crew are at their game of nine-pins; and it is a common wish of all hen-pecked husbands in the neighborhood, when life hangs heavy on their hands, that they might have a quieting draught out of Rip Van Winkle's flagon.

### English Writers on America

*Methinks I see in my mind a noble and puissant nation, rousing herself like a strong man after sleep, and shaking her invisible locks. methinks I see her as an eagle, mewing her mighty youth, and kindling her endazzled eyes at the full mid-day beam.* MILTON ON THE LIBERTY OF THE PRESS.<sup>68</sup>

It is with feelings of deep regret that I observe the literary animosity daily growing up between England and America. Great curiosity has been awakened of

late with respect to the United States, and the London press has teemed with volumes of travels through the Republic, but they seem intended to diffuse error rather than knowledge, and so successful have they been, that, notwithstanding the constant intercourse between the nations, there is no people concerning whom the great mass of the British public have less pure information, or entertain more numerous prejudices.

English travellers are the best and the worst in the world. Where no motives of pride or interest intervene, none can equal them for profound and philosophical views of society, or faithful and graphical descriptions of external objects, but when either the interest or reputation of their own country comes in collision with that of another, they go to the opposite extreme, and forget their usual probity and candor in the indulgence of splenetic remark and an illiberal spirit of ridicule.

Hence, their travels are more honest and accurate, the more remote the country described. I would place implicit confidence in an Englishman's descriptions of the regions beyond the cataracts of the Nile, of unknown islands in the Yellow Sea; of the interior of India, or of any other tract which other travellers might be apt to picture out with the illusions of their fancies; but I would cautiously receive his account of his immediate neighbors and of those nations with which he is in habits of most frequent intercourse. However I might be disposed to trust his probity, I dare not trust his prejudices.

It has also been the peculiar lot of our country to be visited by the worst kind of English travellers. While men of philosophical spirit and cultivated minds have been sent from England to ransack the poles, to penetrate the deserts, and to study the manners and customs of barbarous nations, with which she can have no permanent intercourse of profit or pleasure; it has been left to the broken-down 40 tradesman, the scheming adventurer, the wandering mechanic, the Manchester and Birmingham agent, to be her oracles respecting America. From such sources she is content to receive her information respecting a country in a singular state of moral and physical development; a country in which one of the greatest political experiments in the history of the world is now performing, and which presents the most profound and momentous studies to the statesman and philosopher.

<sup>68</sup> From Milton's *Areopagitica*, published in 1644.

That such men should give prejudiced accounts of America is not a matter of surprise. The themes it offers for contemplation are too vast and elevated for their capacities. The national character is yet in a state of fermentation: it may have its frothiness and sediment, but its ingredients are sound and wholesome. It has already given proofs of powerful and generous qualities; and the whole promises to settle down into something substantially excellent. But the causes which are operating to strengthen and ennoble it, and its daily indications of admirable properties, are all lost upon these purblind observers, who are only affected by the little asperities incident to its present situation. They are capable of judging only of the surface of things, of those matters which come in contact with their private interests and personal gratifications. They miss some of the snug conveniences and petty comforts which belong to an old, highly finished, and overpopulous state of society, where the ranks of useful labor are crowded, and many earn a painful and servile subsistence by studying the very caprices of appetite and self-indulgence. These minor comforts, however, are all-important in the estimation of narrow minds, which either do not perceive, or will not acknowledge, that they are more than counterbalanced among us by great and generally diffused blessings.

They may, perhaps, have been disappointed in some unreasonable expectation of sudden gain. They may have pictured America to themselves an *El Dorado*, where gold and silver abounded, and the natives were lacking in sagacity; and where they were to become strangely and suddenly rich, in some unforeseen but easy manner. The same weakness of mind that indulges absurd expectations produces petulance in disappointment. Such persons become embittered against the country on finding that there, as everywhere else, a man must sow before he can reap; must win wealth by industry and talent; and must contend with the common difficulties of nature and the shrewdness of an intelligent and enterprising people.

Perhaps, through mistaken, or ill-directed hospitality, or from the prompt disposition to cheer and countenance the stranger, prevalent among my countrymen, they may have been treated with unwonted respect in America, and having been accustomed all their lives to consider themselves below the surface of good society, and brought up in a servile feeling

of inferiority, they become arrogant on the common boon of civility: they attribute to the lowliness of others their own elevation, and underrate a society where there are no artificial distinctions, and where, by any chance, such individuals as themselves can rise to consequence.

One would suppose, however, that information coming from such sources, on a subject where the truth is so desirable, would be received with caution by the censors of the press, that the motives of these men, their veracity, their opportunities of inquiry and observation, and their capacities for judging correctly, would be rigorously scrutinized before their evidence was admitted, in such sweeping extent, against a kindred nation. The very reverse, however, is the case, and it furnishes a striking instance of human inconsistency. Nothing can surpass the vigilance with which English critics will examine the credibility of the traveller who publishes an account of some distant, and comparatively unimportant country. How warily will they compare the measurements of a pyramid or the descriptions of a ruin; and how sternly will they censure any inaccuracy in these contributions of merely curious knowledge: while they will receive, with eagerness and unhesitating faith, the gross misrepresentations of coarse and obscure writers concerning a country with which their own is placed in the most important and delicate relations. Nay, they will even make these apocryphal volumes textbooks, on which to enlarge with a zeal and an ability worthy of a more generous cause.

I shall not, however, dwell on this irksome and hackneyed topic; nor should I have adverted to it, but for the undue interest apparently taken in it by my countrymen, and certain injurious effects which I apprehend it might produce upon the national feeling. We attach too much consequence to these attacks. They cannot do us any essential injury. The tissue of misrepresentations attempted to be woven round us are like cobwebs woven round the limbs of an infant giant. Our country continually outgrows them. One falsehood after another falls off of itself. We have but to live on, and every day we live a whole volume of refutation. All the writers of England united, if we could for a moment suppose their great minds stooping to so unworthy a combination, could not conceal our rapidly growing importance and matchless prosperity. They could not conceal that these are owing, not merely to physical



and local, but also to moral causes—to the political liberty, the general diffusion of knowledge, the prevalence of sound, moral, and religious principles which give force and sustained energy to the character of a people; and which, in fact, have been the acknowledged and wonderful supporters of their own national power, and glory

But why are we so exquisitely alive to the aspersions of England? Why do we suffer ourselves to be so affected by the contumely she has endeavored to cast upon us? It is not in the opinion of England alone that honor lives, and reputation has its being. The world at large is the arbiter of a nation's fame, with its thousand eyes it witnesses a nation's deeds, and from their collective testimony is national glory or national disgrace established

For ourselves, therefore, it is comparatively of but little importance whether England does us justice or not; it is, perhaps, of far more importance to herself. She is instilling anger and resentment into the bosom of a youthful nation, to grow with its growth, and strengthen with its strength. If in America, as some of her writers are laboring to convince her, she is hereafter to find an invidious rival and a gigantic foe, she may thank those very writers for having provoked rivalry and irritated hostility. Everyone knows the all-pervading influence of literature at the present day, and how much the opinions and passions of mankind are under its control. The mere contests of the sword are temporary, their wounds are but in the flesh, and it is the pride of the generous to forgive and forget them; but the slanders of the pen pierce to the heart; they rankle longest in the noblest spirits; they dwell ever present in the mind, and render it morbidly sensitive to the most trifling collision. It is but seldom that any one overt act produces hostilities between two nations; there exists, most commonly, a previous jealousy and ill-will, a predisposition to take offense. Trace these to their cause, and how often will they be found to originate in the mischievous effusions of mercenary writers, who, secure in their closets, and for ignominious bread, concoct and circulate the venom that is to inflame the generous and the brave.

I am not laying too much stress upon this point, for it applies most emphatically to our particular case. Over no nation does the press hold a more absolute control than over the people of America, for the universal education of the poorest classes makes every

individual a reader. There is nothing published in England on the subject of our country, that does not circulate through every part of it. There is not a calumny dropped from an English pen, nor an unworthy sarcasm uttered by an English statesman, that does not go to blight good will and add to the mass of latent resentment. Possessing, then, as England does, the fountain-head from whence the literature of the language flows, how completely is it in her power, and how truly is it her duty, to make it the medium of amiable and magnanimous feeling—a stream where two nations meet together and drink in peace and kindness. Should she, however, persist in turning it to waters of bitterness, the time may come when she may repent her folly. The present friendship of America may be of but little moment to her, but the future destinies of that country do not admit of a doubt, over those of England, there lower some shadows of uncertainty. Should, then, a day of gloom arrive—should these reverses overtake her from which the proudest empires have not been exempt—she may look back with regret at her infatuation in repulsing from her side a nation she might have grappled to her bosom, and thus destroying her only chance for real friendship beyond the boundaries of her own dominions.

There is a general impression in England that the people of the United States are inimical to the parent country. It is one of the errors which have been diligently propagated by designing writers. There is, doubtless, considerable political hostility, and a general soreness at the illiberality of the English press, but, collectively speaking, the prepossessions of the people are strongly in favor of England. Indeed, at one time they amounted, in many parts of the Union, to an absurd degree of bigotry. The bare name of Englishman was a passport to the confidence and hospitality of every family, and too often gave a transient currency to the worthless and the ungrateful. Throughout the country there was something of enthusiasm connected with the idea of England. We looked to it with a hallowed feeling of tenderness and veneration, as the land of our forefathers—the august repository of the monuments and antiquities of our race—the birthplace and mausoleum of the sages and heroes of our paternal history. After our own country, there was none in whose glory we more delighted—none whose good opinion we were more anxious to possess—none towards which our

hearts yearned with such throbbings of warm consanguinity. Even during the late war, whenever there was the least opportunity for kind feelings to spring forth, it was the delight of the generous spirits of our country to show that, in the midst of hostilities, they still kept alive the sparks of future friendship.

Is all this to be at an end? Is this golden band of kindred sympathies, so rare between nations, to be broken for ever?—Perhaps it is for the best—it may dispel an illusion which might have kept us in mental vassalage, which might have interfered occasionally with our true interests, and prevented the growth of proper national pride. But it is hard to give up the kindred tie! and there are feelings dearer than interest—closer to the heart than pride—that will still make us cast back a look of regret, as we wander farther and farther from the paternal roof, and lament the waywardness of the parent that would repel the affections of the child.

Shortsighted and injudicious, however, as the conduct of England may be in this system of aspersion, recrimination on our part would be equally ill-judged. I speak not of a prompt and spirited vindication of our country nor the keenest castigation of her slanderers—but I allude to a disposition to retaliate in kind; to retort sarcasm and inspire prejudice, which seems to be growing widely among our writers. Let us guard particularly against such a temper, for it will redouble the evil instead of redressing the wrong. Nothing is so easy and inviting as the retort of abuse and sarcasm; but it is a paltry and unprofitable contest. It is the alternative of a morbid mind, fretted into petulance rather than warmed into indignation. If England is willing to permit the mean jealousies of trade or the rancorous animosities of politics to deprave the integrity of her press and poison the fountain of public opinion, let us beware of her example. She may deem it her interest to diffuse error and engender antipathy, for the purpose of checking emigration; we have no purpose of the kind to serve. Neither have we any spirit of national jealousy to gratify; for as yet, in all our rivalships with England, we are the rising and the gaining party. There can be no end to answer, therefore, but the gratification of resentment—a mere spirit of retaliation; and even that is impotent. Our retorts are never republished in England, they fall short, therefore, of their aim; but they foster a querulous and peevish temper among our writers, they sour the sweet flow of our early litera-

ture and sow thorns and brambles among its blossoms. What is still worse, they circulate through our own country, and, as far as they have effect, excite virulent national prejudices. This last is the evil most especially to be deprecated. Governed, as we are, entirely by public opinion, the utmost care should be taken to preserve the purity of the public mind. Knowledge is power, and truth is knowledge; whoever, therefore, knowingly propagates a prejudice willfully saps the foundation of his country's strength.

The members of a republic, above all other men, should be candid and dispassionate. They are, individually, portions of the sovereign mind and sovereign will, and should be enabled to come to all questions of national concern with calm and unbiased judgments. From the peculiar nature of our relations with England, we must have more frequent questions of a difficult and delicate character with her than with any other nation—questions that affect the most acute and excitable feelings, and as, in the adjusting of these, our national measures must ultimately be determined by popular sentiment, we cannot be too anxiously attentive to purify it from all latent passion or prepossession.

Opening, too, as we do, an asylum for strangers from every portion of the earth, we should receive all with impartiality. It should be our pride to exhibit an example of one nation, at least, destitute of national antipathies and exercising not merely the overt acts of hospitality, but those more rare and noble courtesies which spring from liberality of opinion.

What have we to do with national prejudices? They are the inveterate diseases of old countries, contracted in rude and ignorant ages, when nations knew but little of each other, and looked beyond their own boundaries with distrust and hostility. We, on the contrary, have sprung into national existence in an enlightened and philosophic age, when the different parts of the habitable world and the various branches of the human family have been indefatigably studied and made known to each other; and we forego the advantages of our birth if we do not shake off the national prejudices, as we would the local superstitions, of the old world.

But above all let us not be influenced by any angry feelings so far as to shut our eyes to the perception of what is really excellent and amiable in the English character. We are a young people, necessarily an imitative one, and must take our examples and

models, in a great degree, from the existing nations of Europe. There is no country more worthy of our study than England. The spirit of her constitution is most analogous to ours. The manners of her people—their intellectual activity—their freedom of opinion—their habits of thinking on those subjects which concern the dearest interests and most sacred charities of private life, are all congenial to the American character, and, in fact, are all intrinsically excellent; for it is in the moral feeling of the people that the deep foundations of British prosperity are laid, and however the superstructure may be timeworn or overrun by abuses, there must be something solid in the basis, admirable in the materials, and stable in the structure of an edifice that so long has towered unshaken amidst the tempests of the world.

Let it be the pride of our writers, therefore, discarding all feelings of irritation, and disdaining to retaliate the illiberality of British authors, to speak of the English nation without prejudice and with determined candor. While they rebuke the indiscriminating bigotry with which some of our countrymen admire and imitate everything English, merely because it is English, let them frankly point out what is really worthy of approbation. We may thus place England before us as a perpetual volume of reference, wherein are recorded sound deductions from ages of experience; and while we avoid the errors and absurdities which may have crept into the page, we may draw thence golden maxims of practical wisdom, wherewith to strengthen and to embellish our national character.

1820

### *Rural Life in England*

*Oh! friendly to the best pursuits of man,  
Friendly to thought, to virtue, and to peace,  
Domestic life in rural pleasures past!*

COWPER

The stranger who would form a correct opinion of the English character must not confine his observations to the metropolis. He must go forth into the country, he must sojourn in villages and hamlets, he must visit castles, villas, farm-houses, cottages; he must wander through parks and gardens; along hedges and green lanes; he must loiter about country churches; attend wakes and fairs, and other rural festivals; and cope with the people in all their conditions, and all their habits and humors.

In some countries the large cities absorb the wealth and fashion of the nation; they are the only fixed abodes of elegant and intelligent society, and the country is inhabited almost entirely by boorish peasantry. In England, on the contrary, the metropolis is a mere gathering-place, or general rendezvous, of the polite classes, where they devote a small portion of the year to a hurry of gayety and dissipation, and, having indulged this kind of carnival, return again to the apparently more congenial habits of rural life. The various orders of society are therefore diffused over the whole surface of the kingdom, and the most retired neighborhoods afford specimens of the different ranks.

The English, in fact, are strongly gifted with the rural feeling. They possess a quick sensibility to the beauties of nature, and a keen relish for the pleasures and employments of the country. This passion seems inherent in them. Even the inhabitants of cities, born and brought up among brick walls and bustling streets, enter with facility into rural habits, and evince a tact for rural occupation. The merchant has his snug retreat in the vicinity of the metropolis, where he often displays as much pride and zeal in the cultivation of his flower-garden, and the maturing of his fruits, as he does in the conduct of his business, and the success of a commercial enterprise. Even those less fortunate individuals, who are doomed to pass their lives in the midst of din and traffic, contrive to have something that shall remind them of the green aspect of nature. In the most dark and dingy quarters of the city, the drawing-room window resembles frequently a bank of flowers, every spot capable of vegetation has its grass-plot and flower-bed; and every square its mimic park, laid out with picturesque taste, and gleaming with refreshing verdure.

Those who see the Englishman only in town are apt to form an unfavorable opinion of his social character. He is either absorbed in business, or distracted by the thousand engagements that dissipate time, thought, and feeling, in this huge metropolis. He has, therefore, too commonly a look of hurry and abstraction. Wherever he happens to be, he is on the point of going somewhere else; at the moment he is talking on one subject, his mind is wandering to another; and while paying a friendly visit, he is calculating how he shall economize time so as to pay the other visits allotted in the morning. An immense metropolis, like London, is calculated to make men selfish and unin-

teresting. In their casual and transient meetings, they can but deal briefly in commonplaces. They present but the cold superficialities of character—its rich and genial qualities have no time to be warmed into a flow.

It is in the country that the Englishman gives scope to his natural feelings. He breaks loose gladly from the cold formalities and negative civilities of town, throws off his habits of shy reserve, and becomes joyous and free-hearted. He manages to collect 10 round him all the conveniences and elegancies of polite life, and to banish its restraints. His country-seat abounds with every requisite, either for studious retirement, tasteful gratification, or rural exercise. Books, paintings, music, horses, dogs, and sporting implements of all kinds, are at hand. He puts no constraint either upon his guests or himself, but in the true spirit of hospitality provides the means of enjoyment, and leaves every one to partake according to his inclination.

The taste of the English in the cultivation of land, and in what is called landscape gardening, is unrivalled. They have studied nature intently, and discover an exquisite sense of her beautiful forms and harmonious combinations. Those charms, which in other countries she lavishes in wild solitudes, are here assembled round the haunts of domestic life. They seem to have caught her coy and furtive graces, and spread them, like witchery, about their rural abodes.

Nothing can be more imposing than the mag- 30 nificence of English park scenery. Vast lawns that extend like sheets of vivid green, with here and there clumps of gigantic trees, heaping up rich piles of foliage; the solemn pomp of groves and woodland glades, with the deer trooping in silent herds across them, the hare, bounding away to the covert; or the pheasant, suddenly bursting upon the wing; the brook, taught to wind in natural meanderings or expand into a glassy lake; the sequestered pool, reflecting the quivering trees, with the yellow leaf sleep- 40 ing on its bosom, and the trout roaming fearlessly about its limpid waters, while some rustic temple or sylvan statue, grown green and dank with age, gives an air of classic sanctity to the seclusion.

These are but a few of the features of park scenery; but what most delights me, is the creative talent with which the English decorate the unostentatious abodes of middle life. The rudest habitation, the most unpromising and scanty portion of land, in the hands

of an Englishman of taste, becomes a little paradise. With a nicely discriminating eye, he seizes at once upon its capabilities, and pictures in his mind the future landscape. The sterile spot grows into loveliness under his hand, and yet the operations of art which produce the effect are scarcely to be perceived. The cherishing and taming of some trees, the cautious pruning of others, the nice distribution of flowers and plants of tender and graceful foliage, the introduction of a green slope of velvet turf, the partial opening to a peep of blue distance, or silver gleam of water: all these are managed with a delicate tact, a pervading yet quiet assiduity, like the magic touchings with which a painter finishes up a favorite picture.

The residence of people of fortune and refinement in the country has diffused a degree of taste and elegance in rural economy, that descends to the lowest class. The very laborer, with his thatched cottage 20 and narrow slip of ground, attends to their embellishment. The trim hedge, the grass-plot before the door, the little flower-bed bordered with snug box, the woodbine trained up against the wall, and hanging its blossoms about the lattice, the pot of flowers in the window, the holly, providently planted about the house, to cheat winter of its dreariness, and to throw in a semblance of green summer to cheer the fireside: all these bespeak the influence of taste, flowing down from high sources, and pervading the lowest levels of the public mind. If ever Love, as poets sing, delights to visit a cottage, it must be the cottage of an English peasant.

The fondness for rural life among the higher classes of the English has had a great and salutary effect upon the national character. I do not know a finer race of men than the English gentlemen. Instead of the softness and effeminacy which characterize the men of rank in most countries, they exhibit a union of elegance and strength, a robustness of frame and freshness of complexion, which I am inclined to attribute to their living so much in the open air, and pursuing so eagerly the invigorating recreations of the country. These hardy exercises produce also a healthful tone of mind and spirits, and a manliness and simplicity of manners, which even the follies and dissipations of the town cannot easily pervert, and can never entirely destroy. In the country, too, the different orders of society seem to approach more freely, to be more disposed to blend and operate

favorably upon each other. The distinctions between them do not appear to be so marked and impassable as in the cities. The manner in which property has been distributed into small estates and farms has established a regular gradation from the nobleman, through the classes of gentry, small landed proprietors, and substantial farmers, down to the laboring peasantry, and while it has thus banded the extremes of society together, has infused into each intermediate rank a spirit of independence. This, it must be confessed, is not so universally the case at present as it was formerly, the larger estates having, in late years of distress, absorbed the smaller, and, in some parts of the country, almost annihilated the sturdy race of small farmers. These, however, I believe, are but casual breaks in the general system I have mentioned.

In rural occupation there is nothing mean and debasing. It leads a man forth among scenes of natural grandeur and beauty; it leaves him to the workings of his own mind, operated upon by the purest and most elevating of external influences. Such a man may be simple and rough, but he cannot be vulgar. The man of refinement, therefore, finds nothing revolting in an intercourse with the lower orders in rural life, as he does when he casually mingles with the lower orders of cities. He lays aside his distance and reserve, and is glad to waive the distinctions of rank, and to enter into the honest, heartfelt enjoyments of common life. Indeed the very amusements of the country bring men more and more together, and the sound of hound and horn blend all feelings into harmony. I believe this is one great reason why the nobility and gentry are more popular among the inferior orders in England than they are in any other country; and why the latter have endured so many excessive pressures and extremities, without repining more generally at the unequal distribution of fortune and privilege.

To this mingling of cultivated and rustic society may also be attributed the rural feeling that runs through British literature, the frequent use of illustrations from rural life; those incomparable descriptions of nature that abound in the British poets, that have continued down from the "Flower and the Leaf" of Chaucer, and have brought into our closets all the freshness and fragrance of the dewy landscape. The pastoral writers of other countries appear as if they had paid nature an occasional visit, and become acquainted with her general charms; but the British

poets have lived and revelled with her—they have wooed her in her most secret haunts—they have watched her minutest caprices. A spray could not tremble in the breeze—a leaf could not rustle to the ground—a diamond-drop could not patter in the stream—a fragrance could not exhale from the humble violet, nor a daisy unfold its crimson tints to the morning, but it has been noticed by these impassioned and delicate observers, and wrought up into some beautiful morality.

The effect of this devotion of elegant minds to rural occupations has been wonderful on the face of the country. A great part of the island is rather level, and would be monotonous, were it not for the charms of culture. but it is studded and gemmed, as it were, with castles and palaces, and embroidered with parks and gardens. It does not abound in grand and sublime prospects, but rather in little home scenes of rural repose and sheltered quiet. Every antique farm-house and moss-grown cottage is a picture. and as the roads are continually winding, and the view is shut in by groves and hedges, the eye is delighted by a continual succession of small landscapes of captivating loveliness.

The great charm, however, of English scenery is the moral feeling that seems to pervade it. It is associated in the mind with ideas of order, of quiet, of sober well-established principles, of hoary usage and reverend custom. Every thing seems to be the growth of ages of regular and peaceful existence. The old church of remote architecture, with its low massive portal, its gothic tower, its windows rich with tracery and painted glass, in scrupulous preservation, its stately monuments of warriors and worthies of the olden time, ancestors of the present lords of the soil; its tombstones, recording successive generations of sturdy yeomanry, whose progeny still plough the same fields, and kneel at the same altar—the parsonage, a quaint irregular pile, partly antiquated, but repaired and altered in the tastes of various ages and occupants—the stile and footpath leading from the churchyard, across pleasant fields, and along shady hedge-rows, according to an immemorial right of way—the neighboring village, with its venerable cottages, its public green sheltered by trees, under which the forefathers of the present race have sported—the antique family mansion, standing apart in some little rural domain, but looking down with a protecting air on the surrounding scene: all these common features of English

landscape evince a calm and settled security, an hereditary transmission of homebred virtues and local attachments, that speak deeply and touchingly for the moral character of the nation

It is a pleasing sight of a Sunday morning, when the bell is sending its sober melody across the quiet fields, to behold the peasantry in their best finery, with ruddy faces and modest cheerfulness, thronging tranquilly along the green lanes to church, but it is still more pleasing to see them in the evenings, <sup>10</sup> gathering about their cottage doors, and appearing to exult in the humble comforts and embellishments which their own hands have spread around them.

It is this sweet home-feeling, this settled repose of affection in the domestic scene, that is, after all, the parent of the steadiest virtues and purest enjoyments, and I cannot close these desultory remarks better, than by quoting the words of a modern English poet, who has depicted it with remarkable felicity

Through each gradation, from the castled hall,  
The city dome, the villa crown'd with shade,  
But chief from modest mansions numberless,  
In town or hamlet, shelt'ring middle life,  
Down to the cottaged vale, and strawroof'd shed;  
This western isle hath long been famed for scenes  
Where bliss domestic finds a dwelling-place;  
Domestic bliss, that, like a harmless dove,  
(Honor and sweet endearment keeping guard,)  
Can center in a little quiet nest  
All that desire would fly for through the earth,  
That can, the world eluding, be itself  
A world enjoy'd; that wants no witnesses  
But its own sharers, and approving heaven,  
That, like a flower deep hid in rocky cleft,  
Smiles, though 'tis looking only at the sky.\*

### *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* <sup>69</sup>

FOUND AMONG THE PAPERS  
OF THE LATE DIEDRICH KNICKERBOCKER

*A pleasing land of drowsy head it was,  
Of dreams that wave before the half-shut eye;  
And of gay castles in the clouds that pass,  
For ever flushing round a summer sky.*

CASTLE OF INDOLENCE <sup>70</sup>

In the bosom of one of those spacious coves which indent the eastern shore of the Hudson, at that broad

\* From a Poem on the death of the Princess Charlotte, by the Reverend Rann Kennedy, A. M.

<sup>69</sup> For the climactic episode of this story, the pumpkin-throwing episode on Ichabod's midnight ride, Irving adapted a

expansion of the river denominated by the ancient Dutch navigators the Tappan Zee, and where they always prudently shortened sail, and implored the protection of St Nicholas when they crossed, there lies a small market-town or rural port, which by some is called Greensburgh, but which is more generally and properly known by the name of Tarry Town <sup>71</sup> This name was given, we are told, in former days, by the good housewives of the adjacent country, from the inveterate propensity of their husbands to linger about the village tavern on market days. Be that as it may, I do not vouch for the fact, but merely advert to it, for the sake of being precise and authentic. Not far from this village, perhaps about two miles, there is a little valley, or rather lap <sup>72</sup> of land, among high hills, which is one of the quietest places in the whole world. A small brook glides through it, with just murmur enough to lull one to repose, and the occasional whistle of a quail, or tapping of a woodpecker, is <sup>20</sup> almost the only sound that ever breaks in upon the uniform tranquillity.

I recollect that, when a stupling, my first exploit in squirrel-shooting was in a grove of tall walnut-trees that shades one side of the valley. I had wandered into it at noon time, when all nature is peculiarly quiet, and was startled by the roar of my own gun, as it broke the Sabbath stillness around, and was prolonged and reverberated by the angry echoes. If ever I should wish for a retreat, whither I might steal from <sup>30</sup> the world and its distractions, and dream quietly away the remnant of a troubled life, I know of none more promising than this little valley.

From the listless repose of the place, and the peculiar character of its inhabitants, who are descendants from the original Dutch settlers, this sequestered glen has long been known by the name of SLEEPY HOLLOW, and its rustic lads are called the Sleepy Hollow Boys throughout all the neighboring country. A drowsy, dreamy influence seems to hang over the <sup>40</sup> land, and to pervade the very atmosphere. Some say that the place was bewitched by a high German doctor, during the early days of the settlement; others, that an old Indian chief, the prophet or wizard of his tribe, held his powwows there before the country was

similar incident which he found in one of the Rubezahl legends as related in Musäus' collections of German folk tales.

<sup>70</sup> An English poem in imitation of Spenser, by James Thomson (1702-48).

<sup>71</sup> One of the earliest Dutch settlements on the Hudson, Irving's place of residence after 1835, and finally his burial place.

<sup>72</sup> Bosom or surface.

discovered by Master Hendrick Hudson.<sup>73</sup> Certain it is, the place still continues under the sway of some witching power, that holds a spell over the minds of the good people, causing them to walk in a continual reverie. They are given to all kinds of marvellous beliefs; are subject to trances and visions; and frequently see strange sights, and hear music and voices in the air. The whole neighborhood abounds with local tales, haunted spots, and twilight superstitions; stars shoot and meteors glare oftener across the valley<sup>10</sup> than in any other part of the country, and the nightmare, with her whole nine fold,<sup>74</sup> seems to make it the favorite scene of her gambols.

The dominant spirit, however, that haunts this enchanted region, and seems to be commander-in-chief of all the powers of the air, is the apparition of a figure on horseback without a head. It is said by some to be the ghost of a Hessian trooper, whose head had been carried away by a cannon-ball, in some nameless battle during the revolutionary war; and<sup>20</sup> who is ever and anon seen by the country folk, hurrying along in the gloom of night, as if on the wings of the wind. His haunts are not confined to the valley, but extend at times to the adjacent roads, and especially to the vicinity of a church at no great distance. Indeed, certain of the most authentic historians of those parts, who have been careful in collecting and collating the floating facts concerning this spectre, allege that the body of the trooper, having been buried in the church-yard, the ghost rides forth to the<sup>30</sup> scene of battle in nightly quest of his head; and that the rushing speed with which he sometimes passes along the Hollow, like a midnight blast, is owing to his being belated, and in a hurry to get back to the church-yard before daybreak.

Such is the general purport of this legendary superstition, which has furnished materials for many a wild story in that region of shadows; and the spectre is known, at all the country firesides, by the name of the Headless Horseman of Sleepy Hollow.

It is remarkable that the visionary propensity I have mentioned is not confined to the native inhabitants of the valley, but is unconsciously imbibed by every one who resides there for a time. However wide awake they may have been before they entered that sleepy region, they are sure, in a little time, to inhale the witching influence of the air, and begin to grow

imaginative—to dream dreams, and see apparitions.

I mention this peaceful spot with all possible laud, for it is in such little retired Dutch valleys, found here and there embosomed in the great State of New-York, that population, manners, and customs, remain fixed; while the great torrent of migration and improvement, which is making such incessant changes in other parts of this restless country, sweeps by them unobserved. They are like those little nooks of still water which border a rapid stream, where we may see the straw and bubble riding quietly at anchor, or slowly revolving in their mimic harbor, undisturbed by the rush of the passing current. Though many years have elapsed since I trod the drowsy shades of Sleepy Hollow, yet I question whether I should not still find the same trees and the same families vegetating in its sheltered bosom.

In this by-place of nature, there abode, in a remote period of American history, that is to say, some thirty years since, a worthy wight of the name of Ichabod Crane, who sojourned, or, as he expressed it, "tarried," in Sleepy Hollow, for the purpose of instructing the children of the vicinity. He was a native of Connecticut; a State which supplies the Union with pioneers for the mind as well as for the forest, and sends forth yearly its legions of frontier woodsmen and country schoolmasters. The cognomen of Crane was not inapplicable to his person. He was tall, but exceedingly lank, with narrow shoulders, long arms and legs, hands that dangled a mile out of his sleeves, feet that might have served for shovels, and his whole frame most loosely hung together. His head was small, and flat at top, with huge ears, large green glassy eyes, and a long snipe nose, so that it looked like a weather-cock, perched upon his spindle neck, to tell which way the wind blew. To see him striding along the profile of a hill on a windy day, with his clothes bagging and fluttering about him, one might<sup>40</sup> have mistaken him for the genius<sup>75</sup> of famine descending upon the earth, or some scarecrow eloped from a cornfield.

His school-house was a low building of one large room, rudely constructed of logs, the windows partly glazed, and partly patched with leaves of old copy-books. It was most ingeniously secured at vacant hours, by a withe twisted in the handle of the door, and stakes set against the window shutters; so that,

<sup>73</sup> See note 67.

<sup>74</sup> An allusion to *King Lear*, III, iv, 126.

<sup>75</sup> Guiding spirit.

though a thief might get in with perfect ease, he would find some embarrassment in getting out, an idea most probably borrowed by the architect, Yost Van Houten, from the mystery of an eel-pot. The school-house stood in a rather lonely but pleasant situation, just at the foot of a woody hill, with a brook running close by, and a formidable birch tree growing at one end of it. From hence the low murmur of his pupils' voices, conning over their lessons, might be heard in a drowsy summer's day, like the hum of a bee-hive, interrupted now and then by the authoritative voice of the master, in the tone of menace or command, or, peradventure, by the appalling sound of the birch, as he urged some tardy loiterer along the flowery path of knowledge. Truth to say, he was a conscientious man, and ever bore in mind the golden maxim, "Spare the rod and spoil the child."<sup>76</sup> —Ichabod Crane's scholars certainly were not spoiled.

I would not have it imagined, however, that he was one of those cruel potentates of the school, who joy<sup>20</sup> in the smart of their subjects; on the contrary, he administered justice with discrimination rather than severity; taking the burthen off the backs of the weak, and laying it on those of the strong. Your mere puny stripling, that winced at the least flourish of the rod, was passed by with indulgence; but the claims of justice were satisfied by inflicting a double portion on some little, tough, wrong-headed, broad-skirted Dutch urchin, who sulked and swelled and grew dogged and sullen beneath the birch. All this he<sup>30</sup> called "doing his duty by their parents," and he never inflicted a chastisement without following it by the assurance, so consolatory to the smarting urchin, that "he would remember it, and thank him for it the longest day he had to live."

When school hours were over, he was even the companion and playmate of the larger boys; and on holiday afternoons would convoy some of the smaller ones home, who happened to have pretty sisters, or good housewives for mothers, noted for the comforts<sup>40</sup> of the cupboard. Indeed it behooved him to keep on good terms with his pupils. The revenue arising from his school was small, and would have been scarcely sufficient to furnish him with daily bread, for he was a huge feeder, and though lank, had the dilating powers of an anaconda; but to help out his main-

tenance, he was, according to country custom in those parts, boarded and lodged at the houses of the farmers, whose children he instructed. With these he lived successively a week at a time; thus going the rounds of the neighborhood, with all his worldly effects tied up in a cotton handkerchief.

That all this might not be too onerous on the purses of his rustic patrons, who are apt to consider the costs of schooling a grievous burden, and schoolmasters as mere drones, he had various ways of rendering himself both useful and agreeable. He assisted the farmers occasionally in the lighter labors of their farms, helped to make hay; mended the fences, took the horses to water; drove the cows from pasture, and cut wood for the winter fire. He laid aside, too, all the dominant dignity and absolute sway with which he lorded it in his little empire, the school, and became wonderfully gentle and ingratulating. He found favor in the eyes of the mothers, by petting the children, particularly the youngest; and like the lion bold,<sup>77</sup> which whilom so magnanimously the lamb did hold, he would sit with a child on one knee, and rock a cradle with his foot for whole hours together.

In addition to his other vocations, he was the singing-master of the neighborhood, and picked up many bright shillings by instructing the young folks in psalmody. It was a matter of no little vanity to him, on Sundays, to take his station in front of the church gallery, with a band of chosen singers, where, in his own mind, he completely carried away the palm from the parson. Certain it is, his voice resounded far above all the rest of the congregation, and there are peculiar quavers still to be heard in that church, and which may even be heard half a mile off, quite to the opposite side of the mill-pond, on a still Sunday morning, which are said to be legitimately descended from the nose of Ichabod Crane. Thus, by divers little make-shifts in that ingenuous way which is commonly denominated "by hook and by crook,"<sup>78</sup> the worthy pedagogue got on tolerably enough, and was thought, by all who understood nothing of the labor of head-work, to have a wonderfully easy life of it.

The schoolmaster is generally a man of some importance in the female circle of a rural neighborhood; being considered a kind of idle gentlemanlike per-

<sup>76</sup> See Proverbs 13:24. The form here given was first used by Samuel Butler, an English poet (1612-80) in Part II of *Hudibras* (1664).

<sup>77</sup> An allusion to a couplet appearing in the *New England Primer*, edition of 1747.

<sup>78</sup> A phrase from *Colyn Cloute* (1523), by John Skelton (1460?-1529), English poet.



sonage, of vastly superior taste and accomplishments to the rough country swains, and, indeed, inferior in learning only to the parson. His appearance, therefore, is apt to occasion some little stir at the tea-table of a farmhouse, and the addition of a supernumerary dish of cakes or sweetmeats, or peradventure, the parade of a silver tea-pot. Our man of letters, therefore, was peculiarly happy in the smiles of all the country damsels. How he would figure among them in the churchyard, between services on Sundays! <sup>10</sup> gathering grapes for them from the wild vines that overrun the surrounding trees, reciting for their amusement all the epitaphs on the tombstones, or sauntering, with a whole bevy of them, along the banks of the adjacent mill-pond, while the more bashful country bumpkins hung sheepishly back, envying his superior elegance and address.

From his half itinerant life, also, he was a kind of travelling gazette, carrying the whole budget of local gossip from house to house; so that his appearance <sup>20</sup> was always greeted with satisfaction. He was, moreover, esteemed by the women as a man of great erudition, for he had read several books quite through, and was a perfect master of Cotton Mather's history of New England Witchcraft,<sup>79</sup> in which, by the way, he most firmly and potently believed.

He was, in fact, an odd mixture of small shrewdness and simple credulity. His appetite for the marvellous, and his powers of digesting it, were equally extraordinary, and both had been increased by his <sup>30</sup> residence in this spellbound region. No tale was too gross or monstrous for his capacious swallow. It was often his delight, after his school was dismissed in the afternoon, to stretch himself on the rich bed of clover, bordering the little brook that whimpered by his school-house, and there con over old Mather's direful tales, until the gathering dusk of the evening made the printed page a mere mist before his eyes. Then, as he wended his way, by swamp and stream and awful woodland, to the farmhouse where he hap- <sup>40</sup> pened to be quartered, every sound of nature, at that witching hour, fluttered his excited imagination: the moan of the whip-poor-will \* from the hill-side; the boding cry of the tree-toad, that harbinger of storm, the dreary hooting of the screech-owl, or the sudden

rustling in the thicket of birds frightened from their roost. The fire-flies, too, which sparkled most vividly in the darkest places, now and then startled him, as one of uncommon brightness would stream across his path, and if, by chance, a huge blockhead of a beetle came winging his blundering flight against him, the poor varlet was ready to give up the ghost, with the idea that he was struck with a witch's token. His only resource on such occasions, either to drown thought, or drive away evil spirits, was to sing psalm tunes,—and the good people of Sleepy Hollow, as they sat by their doors of an evening, were often filled with awe, at hearing his nasal melody, "in linked sweetness long drawn out," <sup>80</sup> floating from the distant hill, or along the dusky road.

Another of his sources of fearful pleasure was, to pass long winter evenings with the old Dutch wives, as they sat spinning by the fire, with a row of apples roasting and spluttering along the hearth, and listen to their marvellous tales of ghosts and goblins, and haunted fields, and haunted brooks, and haunted bridges, and haunted houses, and particularly of the headless horseman, or galloping Hessian of the Hollow, as they sometimes called him. He would delight them equally by his anecdotes of witchcraft, and of the direful omens and portentous sights and sounds in the air, which prevailed in the earlier times of Connecticut; and would frighten them wofully with speculations upon comets and shooting stars, and with the alarming fact that the world did absolutely turn round, and that they were half the time topsy-turvy!

But if there was a pleasure in all this, while snugly cuddling in the chimney corner of a chamber that was all of a ruddy glow from the crackling wood fire, and where, of course, no spectre dared to show his face, it was dearly purchased by the terrors of his subsequent walk homewards. What fearful shapes and shadows beset his path amidst the dim and ghastly glare of a snowy night!—With what wistful look did he eye every trembling ray of light streaming across the waste fields from some distant window!—How often was he appalled by some shrub covered with snow, which, like a sheeted spectre, beset his very path!—How often did he shrink with curdling awe at the sound of his own steps on the frosty crust beneath his feet; and dread to look over his shoulder, lest he should behold some uncouth being tramping

\* "The whip-poor-will is a bird which is only heard at night. It receives its name from its note, which is thought to resemble those words."

<sup>79</sup> Irving was well read in Cotton Mather.

<sup>80</sup> Quoted from Milton's "L'Allegro," line 140.

close behind him!—and how often was he thrown into complete dismay by some rushing blast, howling among the trees, in the idea that it was the Galloping Hessian on one of his nightly scourings!

All these, however, were mere terrors of the night, phantoms of the mind that walk in darkness; and though he had seen many spectres in his time, and been more than once beset by Satan in divers shapes, in his lonely perambulations, yet daylight put an end to all these evils, and he would have passed a 10 pleasant life of it, in despite of the devil and all his works, if his path had not been crossed by a being that causes more perplexity to mortal man than ghosts, goblins, and the whole race of witches put together, and that was—a woman.

Among the musical disciples who assembled, one evening in each week, to receive his instructions in psalmody, was Katrina Van Tassel, the daughter and only child of a substantial Dutch farmer. She was a blooming lass of fresh eighteen, plump as a partridge; 20 ripe and melting and rosy checked as one of her father's peaches, and universally famed, not merely for her beauty, but her vast expectations. She was withal a little of a coquette, as might be perceived even in her dress, which was a mixture of ancient and modern fashions, as most suited to set off her charms. She wore the ornaments of pure yellow gold, which her great-great-grandmother had brought over from Saardam, the tempting stomacher of the older time, and withal a provokingly short petticoat, to display 30 the prettiest foot and ankle in the country round.

Ichabod Crane had a soft and foolish heart towards the sex; and it is not to be wondered at, that so tempting a morsel soon found favor in his eyes; more especially after he had visited her in her paternal mansion. Old Baltus Van Tassel was a perfect picture of a thriving, contented, liberal-hearted farmer. He seldom, it is true, sent either his eyes or his thoughts beyond the boundaries of his own farm; but within 40 those every thing was snug, happy, and well-conditioned. He was satisfied with his wealth, but not proud of it; and piqued himself upon the hearty abundance, rather than the style in which he lived. His stronghold was situated on the banks of the Hudson, in one of those green, sheltered, fertile nooks, in which the Dutch farmers are so fond of nestling. A great elm-tree spread its broad branches over it, at the foot of which bubbled up a spring of the softest and sweetest water, in a little well, formed

of a bairel, and then stole sparkling away through the grass, to a neighboring brook, that bubbled along among alders and dwarf willows. Hard by the farmhouse was a vast barn, that might have served for a church, every window and crevice of which seemed bursting forth with the treasures of the farm, the flail was busily resounding within it from morning to night, swallows and martins skimmed twittering about the eaves, and rows of pigeons, some with one eye turned up, as if watching the weather, some with their heads under their wings, or buried in their bosoms, and others swelling, and cooing, and bowing about their dames, were enjoying the sunshine on the roof. Sleek unwieldy porkers were grunting in the repose and abundance of their pens, whence sallied forth, now and then, troops of sucking pigs, as if to snuff the air. A stately squadron of snowy geese were riding in an adjoining pond, conveying whole fleets of ducks; regiments of turkeys were gobbling through the farmyard, and guinea fowls fretting about it, like ill-tempered housewives, with their peevish discontented cry. Before the barn door strutted the gallant cock, that pattern of a husband, a warrior, and a fine gentleman, clapping his burnished wings, and crowing in the pride and gladness of his heart—sometimes tearing up the earth with his feet, and then generously calling his ever-hungry family of wives and children to enjoy the rich morsel which he had discovered.

The pedagogue's mouth watered, as he looked upon this sumptuous promise of luxurious winter fare. In his devouring mind's eye, he pictured to himself every roasting-pig running about with a pudding in his belly, and an apple in his mouth; the pigeons were snugly put to bed in a comfortable pie, and tucked in with a coverlet of crust, the geese were swimming in their own gravy; and the ducks pairing cosily in dishes, like snug married couples, with a decent competency of onion sauce. In the porkers he saw carved out the future sleek side of bacon, and juicy relishing ham; not a turkey but he beheld daintily trussed up, with its gizzard under its wing, and, peradventure, a necklacc of savory sausages, and even bright chanticleer himself lay sprawling on his back, in a side-dish, with uplifted claws, as if craving that quarter which his chivalrous spirit disdained to ask while living.

As the enraptured Ichabod fancied all this, and as he rolled his great green eyes over the fat meadowlands, the rich fields of wheat, of rye, of buckwheat,

and Indian corn, and the orchards burthened with ruddy fruit, which surrounded the warm tenement of Van Tassel, his heart yearned after the damsel who was to inherit these domains, and his imagination expanded with the idea, how they might be readily turned into cash, and the money invested in immense tracts of wild land, and shingle palaces in the wilderness. Nay, his busy fancy already realized his hopes, and presented to him the blooming Katrina, with a whole family of children, mounted on the top of a wagon loaded with household trumpery, with pots and kettles dangling beneath; and he beheld himself bestriding a pacing mare, with a colt at her heels, setting out for Kentucky, Tennessee, or the Lord knows where.

When he entered the house the conquest of his heart was complete. It was one of those spacious farmhouses, with high-ridged, but lowly-sloping roofs, built in the style handed down from the first Dutch settlers; the low projecting eaves forming a piazza along the front, capable of being closed up in bad weather. Under this were hung flails, harness, various utensils of husbandry, and nets for fishing in the neighboring river. Benches were built along the sides for summer use; and a great spinning-wheel at one end, and a churn at the other, showed the various uses to which this important porch might be devoted. From this piazza the wondering Ichabod entered the hall, which formed the centre of the mansion and the place of usual residence. Here, rows of resplendent pewter, ranged on a long dresser, dazzled his eyes. In one corner stood a huge bag of wool ready to be spun, in another a quantity of linsey-woolsey just from the loom; ears of Indian corn, and strings of dried apples and peaches, hung in gay festoons along the walls, mingled with the gaud of red peppers; and a door left ajar gave him a peep into the best parlor, where the claw-footed chairs, and dark mahogany tables, shone like mirrors; and irons, with their accompanying shovel and tongs, glistened from their covert of asparagus tops; mock-oranges and conch-shells decorated the mantel-piece; strings of various colored birds' eggs were suspended above it. a great ostrich egg was hung from the centre of the room, and a corner cupboard, knowingly left open, displayed immense treasures of old silver and well-mended china.

From the moment Ichabod laid his eyes upon these regions of delight, the peace of his mind was at an end, and his only study was how to gain the affec-

tions of the peerless daughter of Van Tassel. In this enterprise, however, he had more real difficulties than generally fell to the lot of a knight-errant of yore, who seldom had any thing but giants, enchanters, fiery dragons, and such like easily-conquered adversaries, to contend with, and had to make his way merely through gates of iron and brass, and walls of adamant, to the castle keep, where the lady of his heart was confined, all which he achieved as easily as a man would carve his way to the centre of a Christmas pie; and then the lady gave him her hand as a matter of course. Ichabod, on the contrary, had to win his way to the heart of a country coquette, beset with a labyrinth of whims and caprices, which were for ever presenting new difficulties and impediments, and he had to encounter a host of fearful adversaries of real flesh and blood, the numerous rustic admirers, who beset every portal to her heart; keeping a watchful and angry eye upon each other, but ready to fly out in the common cause against any new competitor.

Among these the most formidable was a burly, roaring, roystering blade, of the name of Abraham, or, according to the Dutch abbreviation, Brom Van Brunt, the hero of the country round, which rang with his feats of strength and hardihood. He was broad-shouldered and double-jointed, with short curly black hair, and a bluff, but not unpleasant countenance, having a mingled air of fun and arrogance. From his Herculean frame and great powers of limb, he had received the nickname of BROM BONES, by which he was universally known. He was famed for great knowledge and skill in horsemanship, being as dexterous on horseback as a Tartar. He was foremost at all races and cock-fights; and, with the ascendancy which bodily strength acquires in rustic life, was the umpire in all disputes, setting his hat on one side, and giving his decisions with an air and tone admitting of no gainsay or appeal. He was always ready for either a fight or a frolic, but had more mischief than ill-will in his composition; and, with all his overbearing roughness, there was a strong dash of waggish good humor at bottom. He had three or four boon companions, who regarded him as their model, and at the head of whom he scoured the country, attending every scene of feud or merriment for miles round. In cold weather he was distinguished by a fur cap, surmounted with a flaunting fox's tail, and when the folks at a country gathering descried this well-known crest at a distance, whisking about among a squad

of hard riders, they always stood by for a squall. Sometimes his crew would be heard dashing along past the farmhouses at midnight, with whoop and halloo, like a troop of Don Cossacks,<sup>81</sup> and the old dames, startled out of their sleep, would listen for a moment till the hurry-scurry had clattered by, and then exclaim, "Ay, there goes Brom Bones and his gang!" The neighbors looked upon him with a mixture of awe, admiration, and good will, and when any mad-cap prank, or rustic brawl, occurred in the vicinity,<sup>10</sup> always shook their heads, and warranted Brom Bones was at the bottom of it.

This rantipole<sup>82</sup> hero had for some time singled out the blooming Katina for the object of his uncouth gallantries, and though his amorous toyings were something like the gentle caresses and endearments of a bear, yet it was whispered that she did not altogether discourage his hopes. Certain it is, his advances were signals for rival candidates to retire, who felt no inclination to cross a lion in his amours,<sup>20</sup> insomuch, that when his horse was seen tied to Van Tassel's paling, on a Sunday night, a sure sign that his master was courting, or, as it is termed, "spark-ing," within, all other suitors passed by in despair, and carried the war into other quarters.

Such was the formidable rival with whom Ichabod Crane had to contend, and, considering all things, a stouter man than he would have shrunk from the competition, and a wiser man would have despaired. He had, however, a happy mixture of pliability and<sup>30</sup> perseverance in his nature, he was in form and spirit like a supple-jack<sup>83</sup>—yielding, but tough; though he bent, he never broke; and though he bowed beneath the slightest pressure, yet, the moment it was away—jerk! he was as erect, and carried his head as high as ever.

To have taken the field openly against his rival would have been madness, for he was not a man to be thwarted in his amours, any more than that stormy lover, Achilles. Ichabod, therefore, made his advances<sup>40</sup> in a quiet and gently-insinuating manner. Under cover of his character of singing-master, he made frequent visits at the farmhouse, not that he had any thing to apprehend from the meddling interference of parents, which is so often a stumbling-block in the path of lovers. Balt Van Tassel was an easy

indulgent soul; he loved his daughter better even than his pipe, and, like a reasonable man and an excellent father, let her have her way in every thing. His notable little wife, too, had enough to do to attend to her housekeeping and manage her poultry, for, as she sagely observed, ducks and geese are foolish things, and must be looked after, but girls can take care of themselves. Thus while the busy dame bustled about the house, or plied her spinning-wheel at one end of the piazza, honest Balt would sit smoking his evening pipe at the other, watching the achievements of a little wooden warrior, who, armed with a sword in each hand, was most valiantly fighting the wind on the pinnacle of the barn. In the mean time, Ichabod would carry on his suit with the daughter by the side of the spring under the great elm, or sauntering along in the twilight, that hour so favorable to the lover's eloquence.

I profess not to know how women's hearts are wooed and won. To me they have always been matters of riddle and admiration. Some seem to have but one vulnerable point, or door of access; while others have a thousand avenues, and may be captured in a thousand different ways. It is a great triumph of skill to gain the former, but a still greater proof of generalship to maintain possession of the latter, for the man must battle for his fortress at every door and window. He who wins a thousand common hearts is therefore entitled to some renown, but he who keeps undisputed sway over the heart of a coquette, is indeed a hero. Certain it is, this was not the case with the redoubtable Brom Bones; and from the moment Ichabod Crane made his advances, the interests of the former evidently declined; his horse was no longer seen tied at the palings on Sunday nights, and a deadly feud gradually arose between him and the preceptor of Sleepy Hollow.

Brom, who had a degree of rough chivalry in his nature, would fain have carried matters to open warfare, and have settled their pretensions to the lady, according to the mode of those most concise and simple reasoners, the knights-errant of yore—by single combat; but Ichabod was too conscious of the superior might of his adversary to enter the lists against him: he had overheard a boast of Bones, that he would "double the schoolmaster up, and lay him on a shelf of his own school-house;" and he was too wary to give him an opportunity. There was something extremely provoking in this obstinately pacific system;

<sup>81</sup> Cossacks of the Don River region of Russia, hard-riding adventurers or fighters.

<sup>82</sup> Reckless, wild.

<sup>83</sup> A walking stick, cut from a climbing vine.

it left Brom no alternative but to draw upon the funds of rustic waggery in his disposition, and to play off boorish practical jokes upon his rival Ichabod became the object of whimsical persecution to Bones, and his gang of rough riders. They harried his hitherto peaceful domains; smoked out his singing school, by stopping up the chimney, broke into the school-house at night, in spite of its formidable fastenings of withc and window stakes, and turned every thing topsy-turvy so that the poor schoolmaster began to think all the witches in the country held their meetings there. But what was still more annoying, Brom took all opportunities of turning him into ridicule in presence of his mistress, and had a scoundrel dog whom he taught to whine in the most ludicrous manner, and introduced as a rival of Ichabod's to instruct her in psalmody.

In this way matters went on for some time, without producing any material effect on the relative situation of the contending powers. On a fine autumnal afternoon, Ichabod, in pensive mood, sat enthroned on the lofty stool whence he usually watched all the concerns of his little literary realm. In his hand he swayed a ferule, that sceptre of despotic power; the birch of justice reposed on three nails, behind the throne, a constant terror to evil doers, while on the desk before him might be seen sundry contraband articles and prohibited weapons, detected upon the persons of idle urchins, such as half-munched apples, popguns, whirligigs, fly-cages, and whole legions of rampant little paper game-cocks. Apparently there had been some appalling act of justice recently inflicted, for his scholars were all busily intent upon their books, or slyly whispering behind them with one eye kept upon the master; and a kind of buzzing stillness reigned throughout the schoolroom. It was suddenly interrupted by the appearance of a negro, in tow-cloth jacket and trowsers, a round-crowned fragment of a hat, like the cap of Mercury,<sup>84</sup> and mounted on the back of a ragged, wild, half-broken colt, which he managed with a rope by way of halter. He came clattering up to the school door with an invitation to Ichabod to attend a merry-making or "quilting frolic," to be held that evening at Mynheer Van Tassel's; and having delivered his message with that air of importance, and effort at fine language, which a negro is apt to display on petty embassies of

the kind, he dashed over the brook, and was seen scampering away up the hollow, full of the importance and hurry of his mission.

All was now bustle and hubbub in the late quiet schoolroom. The scholars were hurried through their lessons, without stopping at trifles, those who were nimble skipped over half with impunity, and those who were tardy, had a smart application now and then in the rear, to quicken their speed, or help them over a tall word. Books were flung aside without being put away on the shelves, inkstands were overturned, benches thrown down, and the whole school was turned loose an hour before the usual time, bursting forth like a legion of young imps, yelping and racketing about the green, in joy at their early emancipation.

The gallant Ichabod now spent at least an extra half hour at his toilet, brushing and furbishing up his best, and indeed only suit of rusty black, and arranging his looks by a bit of broken looking-glass, that hung up in the school-house. That he might make his appearance before his mistress in the true style of a cavalier, he borrowed a horse from the farmer with whom he was domiciliated, a choleric old Dutchman, of the name of Hans Van Ripper, and, thus gallantly mounted, issued forth, like a knight-errant in quest of adventures. But it is meet I should, in the true spirit of romantic story, give some account of the looks and equipments of my hero and his steed. The animal he bestrode was a broken-down plough-horse, that had outlived almost every thing but his viciousness. He was gaunt and shagged, with a ewe neck and a head like a hammer, his rusty mane and tail were tangled and knotted with burrs, one eye had lost its pupil, and was glaring and spectral; but the other had the gleam of a genuine devil in it. Still he must have had fire and mettle in his day, if we may judge from the name he bore of Gunpowder. He had, in fact, been a favorite steed of his master's, the choleric Van Ripper, who was a furious rider, and had infused, very probably, some of his own spirit into the animal; for, old and broken-down as he looked, there was more of the lurking devil in him than in any young filly in the country.

Ichabod was a suitable figure for such a steed. He rode with short stirrups, which brought his knees nearly up to the pommel of the saddle, his sharp elbows stuck out like grasshoppers'; he carried his whip perpendicularly in his hand, like a sceptre, and,

<sup>84</sup> Winged hat, symbol of Mercury's speed as the messenger of the gods.

as his horse jogged on, the motion of his arms was not unlike the flapping of a pair of wings. A small wool hat rested on the top of his nose, for so his scanty strip of forehead might be called; and the skirts of his black coat fluttered out almost to the horse's tail. Such was the appearance of Ichabod and his steed, as they shambled out of the gate of Hans Van Ripper, and it was altogether such an apparition as is seldom to be met with in broad daylight.

It was, as I have said, a fine autumnal day, the sky was clear and serene, and nature wore that rich and golden livery which we always associate with the idea of abundance. The forests had put on their sober brown and yellow, while some trees of the tenderer kind had been nipped by the frosts into brilliant dyes of orange, purple, and scarlet. Streaming flocks of wild ducks began to make their appearance high in the air, the bark of the squirrel might be heard from the groves of beech and hickory nuts, and the pensive whistle of the quail at intervals from the neighboring stubble-field.

The small birds were taking their farewell banquets. In the fulness of their revelry, they fluttered, chirping and frolicking, from bush to bush, and tree to tree, capricious from the very profusion and variety around them. There was the honest cock-robin, the favorite game of stripling sportsmen, with its loud querulous note; and the twittering blackbirds flying in sable clouds, and the golden-winged woodpecker, with his crimson crest, his broad black gorget, and splendid plumage, and the cedar bird, with its red-tipt wings and yellow-tipt tail, and its little monteiro cap<sup>85</sup> of feathers; and the blue jay, that noisy coxcomb, in his gay light-blue coat and white underclothes, screaming and chattering, nodding and bobbing and bowing, and pretending to be on good terms with every songster of the grove.

As Ichabod jogged slowly on his way, his eye, ever open to every symptom of culinary abundance, ranged with delight over the treasures of jolly autumn. On all sides he beheld vast store of apples; some hanging in oppressive opulence on the trees; some gathered into baskets and barrels for the market; others heaped up in rich piles for the cider-press. Farther on he beheld great fields of Indian corn, with its golden ears peeping from their leafy coverts, and holding out the promise of cakes and hasty pudding; and the yellow pumpkins lying beneath them,

<sup>85</sup> A hunting cap with a flap

turning up their fair round bellies to the sun, and giving ample prospects of the most luxurious of pies, and anon he passed the fragrant buckwheat fields, breathing the odor of the bee-hive, and as he beheld them, soft anticipations stole over his mind of dainty slap-jacks, well buttered, and garnished with honey or treacle, by the delicate little dimpled hand of Katrina Van Tassel.

Thus feeding his mind with many sweet thoughts and "sugared suppositions," he journeyed along the sides of a range of hills which look out upon some of the goodliest scenes of the mighty Hudson. The sun gradually wheeled his broad disk down into the west. The wide bosom of the Tappan Zee lay motionless and glassy, excepting that here and there a gentle undulation waved and prolonged the blue shadow of the distant mountain. A few amber clouds floated in the sky, without a breath of air to move them. The horizon was of a fine golden tint, changing gradually into a pure apple green, and from that into the deep blue of the mid-heaven. A slanting ray lingered on the woody crests of the precipices that overhung some parts of the river, giving greater depth to the dark-gray and purple of their rocky sides. A sloop was loitering in the distance, dropping slowly down with the tide, her sail hanging uselessly against the mast; and as the reflection of the sky gleamed along the still water, it seemed as if the vessel was suspended in the air.

It was toward evening that Ichabod arrived at the castle of the Heer Van Tassel, which he found thronged with the pride and flower of the adjacent country. Old farmers, a spare leathern-faced race, in homespun coats and breeches, blue stockings, huge shoes, and magnificent pewter buckles. Their brisk withered little dames, in close crimped caps, long-waisted shortgowns, homespun petticoats, with scissors and pin-cushions, and gay calico pockets hanging on the outside. Buxom lasses, almost as antiquated as their mothers, excepting where a straw hat, a fine ribbon, or perhaps a white frock, gave symptoms of city innovation. The sons, in short square-skirted coats with rows of stupendous brass buttons, and their hair generally queued in the fashion of the times, especially if they could procure an eel-skin for the purpose, it being esteemed, throughout the country, as a potent nourisher and strengthener of the hair.

Brom Bones, however, was the hero of the scene,

having come to the gathering on his favorite steed Daedevil, a creature, like himself, full of mettle and mischief, and which no one but himself could manage. He was, in fact, noted for preferring vicious animals, given to all kinds of tricks, which kept the rider in constant risk of his neck, for he held a tractable well-broken horse as unworthy of a lad of spirit.

Fain would I pause to dwell upon the world of charms that burst upon the enraptured gaze of my hero, as he entered the state parlor of Van Tassel's mansion. Not those of the bevy of buxom lasses, with their luxurious display of red and white; but the ample charms of a genuine Dutch country teatable, in the sumptuous time of autumn. Such heaped-up platters of cakes of various and almost indescribable kinds, known only to experienced Dutch housewives! There was the doughty dough-nut, the tenderer oly koek, and the crisp and crumbling cruller; sweet cakes and short cakes, ginger cakes and honey cakes, and the whole family of cakes. And then there were apple pies and peach pies and pumpkin pies; besides slices of ham and smoked beef; and moreover delectable dishes of preserved plums, and peaches, and pears, and quinces; not to mention broiled shad and roasted chickens; together with bowls of milk and cream, all mingled higgledy-piggledy, pretty much as I have enumerated them, with the motherly tea-pot sending up its clouds of vapor from the midst—Heaven bless the mark! I want breath and time to discuss this banquet as it deserves, and am too eager to get on with my story. Happily, Ichabod Crane was not in so great a hurry as his historian, but did ample justice to every dainty.

He was a kind and thankful creature, whose heart dilated in proportion as his skin was filled with good cheer; and whose spirits rose with eating as some men's do with drink. He could not help, too, rolling his large eyes round him as he ate, and chuckling with the possibility that he might one day be lord of all this scene of almost unimaginable luxury and splendor. Then, he thought, how soon he'd turn his back upon the old school-house; snap his fingers in the face of Hans Van Ripper, and every other niggardly patron, and kick any itinerant pedagogue out of doors that should dare to call him comrade!

Old Baltus Van Tassel moved about among his guests with a face dilated with content and good humor, round and jolly as the harvest moon. His hospitable attentions were brief, but expressive, being

confined to a shake of the hand, a slap on the shoulder, a loud laugh, and a pressing invitation to "fall to, and help themselves."

And now the sound of the music from the common room, or hall, summoned to the dance. The musician was an old grayheaded negro, who had been the itinerant orchestra of the neighborhood for more than half a century. His instrument was as old and battered as himself. The greater part of the time he scraped on two or three strings, accompanying every movement of the bow with a motion of the head; bowing almost to the ground, and stamping with his foot whenever a fresh couple were to start.

Ichabod prided himself upon his dancing as much as upon his vocal powers. Not a limb, not a fibre about him was idle, and to have seen his loosely hung frame in full motion, and clattering about the room, you would have thought Saint Vitus himself, that blessed patron of the dance, was figuring before you in person. He was the admiration of all the negroes, who, having gathered, of all ages and sizes, from the farm and the neighborhood, stood forming a pyramid of shining black faces at every door and window, gazing with delight at the scene, rolling their white eye-balls, and showing grinning rows of ivory from ear to ear. How could the flogger of urchins be otherwise than animated and joyous? the lady of his heart was his partner in the dance, and smiling graciously in reply to all his amorous oglings, while Brom Bones, sorely smitten with love and jealousy, sat brooding by himself in one corner.

When the dance was at an end, Ichabod was attracted to a knot of the sager folks, who, with old Van Tassel, sat smoking at one end of the piazza, gossiping over former times, and drawing out long stories about the war.

This neighborhood, at the time of which I am speaking, was one of those highly-favored places which abound with chronicle and great men. The British and American line had run near it during the war; it had, therefore, been the scene of marauding, and infested with refugees, cow-boys,<sup>88</sup> and all kinds of border chivalry. Just sufficient time had elapsed to enable each story-teller to dress up his tale with a little becoming fiction, and, in the indistinctness of his recollection, to make himself the hero of every exploit.

<sup>88</sup> A band of roistering guerrillas who infested the New York region during the Revolution.

There was the story of Doffue Martling, a large blue-bearded Dutchman, who had nearly taken a British frigate with an old iron nine-pounder from a mud breastwork, only that his gun burst at the sixth discharge. And there was an old gentleman who shall be nameless, being too rich a mynheer to be lightly mentioned, who, in the battle of Whiteplains, being an excellent master of defence, parried a musket ball with a small sword, insomuch that he absolutely felt it whizz round the blade, and glance off at the hilt: in proof of which, he was ready at any time to show the sword, with the hilt a little bent. There were several more that had been equally great in the field, not one of whom but was persuaded that he had a considerable hand in bringing the war to a happy termination.

But all these were nothing to the tales of ghosts and apparitions that succeeded. The neighborhood is rich in legendary treasures of the kind. Local tales and superstitions thrive best in these sheltered long-settled retreats; but are trampled under foot by the shifting throng that forms the population of most of our country places. Besides, there is no encouragement for ghosts in most of our villages, for they have scarcely had time to finish their first nap, and turn themselves in their graves, before their surviving friends have travelled away from the neighborhood; so that when they turn out at night to walk their rounds, they have no acquaintance left to call upon. This is perhaps the reason why we so seldom hear of ghosts except in our long-established Dutch communities.

The immediate cause, however, the prevalence of supernatural stories in these parts, was doubtless owing to the vicinity of Sleepy Hollow. There was a contagion in the very air that blew from that haunted region; it breathed forth an atmosphere of dreams and fancies infecting all the land. Several of the Sleepy Hollow people were present at Van Tassel's, and, as usual, were doling out their wild and wonderful legends. Many dismal tales were told about funeral trains, and mourning cries and wailings heard and seen about the great tree where the unfortunate Major André<sup>87</sup> was taken, and which stood in the neighborhood. Some mention was made also of the woman in white, that haunted the dark glen at Raven Rock, and was often heard to shriek on winter nights before a storm, having perished there in the

snow. The chief part of the stories, however, turned upon the favorite spectre of Sleepy Hollow, the headless horseman, who had been heard several times of late, patrolling the country; and, it was said, tethered his horse nightly among the graves in the churchyard.

The sequestered situation of this church seems always to have made it a favorite haunt of troubled spirits. It stands on a knoll, surrounded by locust-trees and lofty elms, from among which its decent whitewashed walls shine modestly forth, like Christian purity beaming through the shades of retirement. A gentle slope descends from it to a silver sheet of water, bordered by high trees, between which, peeps may be caught at the blue hills of the Hudson. To look upon its grass-grown yard, where the sunbeams seem to sleep so quietly, one would think that there at least the dead might rest in peace. On one side of the church extends a wide woody dell, along which raves a large brook among broken rocks and trunks of fallen trees. Over a deep black part of the stream, not far from the church, was formerly thrown a wooden bridge; the road that led to it, and the bridge itself, were thickly shaded by overhanging trees, which cast a gloom about it, even in the daytime; but occasioned a fearful darkness at night. This was one of the favorite haunts of the headless horseman; and the place where he was most frequently encountered. The tale was told of old Brouwer, a most heretical disbeliever in ghosts, how he met the horseman returning from his foray into Sleepy Hollow, and was obliged to get up behind him, how they galloped over bush and brake, over hill and swamp, until they reached the bridge, when the horseman suddenly turned into a skeleton, threw old Brouwer into the brook, and sprang away over the tree-tops with a clap of thunder.

This story was immediately matched by a thrice marvellous adventure of Brom Bones, who made light of the galloping Hessian as an ardent jockey. He affirmed that, on returning one night from the neighboring village of Sing Sing, he had been overtaken by this midnight trooper; that he had offered to race with him for a bowl of punch, and should have won it too, for Daredevil beat the goblin-horse all hollow, but, just as they came to the church-bridge, the Hessian bolted, and vanished in a flash of fire.

All these tales, told in that drowsy undertone with which men talk in the dark, the countenances of the listeners only now and then receiving a casual gleam

<sup>87</sup> Major André (1751-80), British spy executed at Tappan.



from the glare of a pipe, sank deep in the mind of Ichabod. He repaid them in kind with large extracts from his invaluable author, Cotton Mather, and added many marvellous events that had taken place in his native State of Connecticut, and fearful sights which he had seen in his nightly walks about Sleepy Hollow.

The revel now gradually broke up. The old farmers gathered together their families in their wagons, and were heard for some time rattling along the hollow roads, and over the distant hills. Some of the damsels mounted on pillions behind their favorite swains, and their light-hearted laughter, mingling with the clatter of hoofs, echoed along the silent woodlands, sounding fainter and fainter until they gradually died away—and the late scene of noise and frolic was all silent and deserted. Ichabod only lingered behind, according to the custom of country lovers, to have a tête-à-tête with the heiress, fully convinced that he was now on the high road to success. What passed at this interview I will not pretend to say, for in fact I do not know. Something, however, I fear me, must have gone wrong, for he certainly sallied forth, after no very great interval, with an air quite desolate and chop-fallen.—Oh these women! these women! Could that girl have been playing off any of her coquettish tricks?—Was her encouragement of the poor pedagogue all a mere sham to secure her conquest of his rival?—Heaven only knows, not I!—Let it suffice to say, Ichabod stole forth with the air of one who had been sacking a hen-roost, rather than a fair lady's heart. Without looking to the right or left to notice the scene of rural wealth, on which he had so often gloated, he went straight to the stable, and with several hearty cuffs and kicks, roused his steed most uncourtously from the comfortable quarters in which he was soundly sleeping, dreaming of mountains of corn and oats, and whole valleys of timothy and clover.

It was the very witching time of night that Ichabod, heavy-hearted and crest-fallen, pursued his travel homewards, along the sides of the lofty hills which rise above Tarry Town, and which he had traversed so cheerily in the afternoon. The hour was as dismal as himself. Far below him, the Tappan Zee spread its dusky and indistinct waste of waters, with here and there the tall mast of a sloop, riding quietly at anchor under the land. In the dead hush of midnight, he could even hear the barking of the watch dog from

the opposite shore of the Hudson, but it was so vague and faint as only to give an idea of his distance from this faithful companion of man. Now and then, too, the long-drawn crowing of a cock, accidentally awakened, would sound far, far off, from some farmhouse away among the hills—but it was like a dreaming sound in his ear. No signs of life occurred near him, but occasionally the melancholy chirp of a cricket, or perhaps the guttural twang of a bull-frog, from a neighboring marsh, as if sleeping uncomfortably, and turning suddenly in his bed.

All the stories of ghosts and goblins that he had heard in the afternoon, now came crowding upon his recollection. The night grew darker and darker; the stars seemed to sink deeper in the sky, and driving clouds occasionally hid them from his sight. He had never felt so lonely and dismal. He was, moreover, approaching the very place where many of the scenes of the ghost stories had been laid. In the centre of the road stood an enormous tulip-tree, which towered like a giant above all the other trees of the neighborhood, and formed a kind of landmark. Its limbs were gnarled, and fantastic, large enough to form trunks for ordinary trees, twisting down almost to the earth, and rising again into the air. It was connected with the tragical story of the unfortunate André, who had been taken prisoner hard by, and was universally known by the name of Major André's tree. The common people regarded it with a mixture of respect and superstition, partly out of sympathy for the fate of its ill-starred namesake, and partly from the tales of strange sights and doleful lamentations told concerning it.

As Ichabod approached this fearful tree, he began to whistle—he thought his whistle was answered—it was but a blast sweeping sharply through the dry branches. As he approached a little nearer, he thought he saw something white, hanging in the midst of the tree—he paused and ceased whistling, but on looking more narrowly, perceived that it was a place where the tree had been scathed by lightning, and the white wood laid bare. Suddenly he heard a groan—his teeth chattered and his knees smote against the saddle. It was but the rubbing of one huge bough upon another, as they were swayed about by the breeze. He passed the tree in safety, but new perils lay before him.

About two hundred yards from the tree a small brook crossed the road, and ran into a marshy and thickly-wooded glen, known by the name of Wiley's

swamp A few rough logs, laid side by side, served for a bridge over this stream. On that side of the road where the brook entered the wood, a group of oaks and chestnuts, matted thick with wild grape-vines, threw a cavernous gloom over it To pass this bridge was the severest trial It was at this identical spot that the unfortunate André was captured, and under the covert of those chestnuts and vines were the sturdy yeomen concealed who surprised him. This has ever since been considered a haunted stream, and fearful are the feelings of the schoolboy who has to pass it alone after dark

As he approached the stream his heart began to thump, he summoned up, however, all his resolution, gave his horse half a score of kicks in the ribs, and attempted to dash briskly across the bridge, but instead of starting forward, the perverse old animal made a lateral movement, and ran broadside against the fence. Ichabod, whose fears increased with the delay, jerked the reins on the other side, and kicked 20 lustily with the contrary foot. it was all in vain, his steed started, it is true, but it was only to plunge to the opposite side of the road into a thicket of brambles and alder bushes. The schoolmaster now bestowed both whip and heel upon the starveling ribs of old Gunpowder, who dashed forward, snuffing and snorting, but came to a stand just by the bridge, with a suddenness that had nearly sent his rider sprawling over his head. Just at this moment a plashy tramp by the side of the bridge caught the sensitive 30 ear of Ichabod. In the dark shadow of the grove, on the margin of the brook, he beheld something huge, misshapen, black and towering. It stirred not, but seemed gathered up in the gloom, like some gigantic monster ready to spring upon the traveller.

The hair of the affrighted pedagogue rose upon his head with terror. What was to be done? To turn and fly was now too late; and besides, what chance was there of escaping ghost or goblin, if such it was, which could ride upon the wings of the wind? Summoning up, therefore, a show of courage, he demanded in stammering accents—"Who are you?" He received no reply. He repeated his demand in a still more agitated voice. Still there was no answer. Once more he cudgelled the sides of the inflexible Gunpowder, and, shutting his eyes, broke forth with involuntary fervor into a psalm tune Just then the shadowy object of alarm put itself in motion, and, with a scramble and a bound, stood at once in the

middle of the road. Though the night was dark and dismal, yet the form of the unknown might now in some degree be ascertained He appeared to be a horseman of large dimensions, and mounted on a black horse of powerful frame He made no offer of molestation or sociability, but kept aloof on one side of the road, jogging along on the blind side of old Gunpowder, who had now got over his fright and waywardness.

Ichabod, who had no relish for this strange midnight companion, and bethought himself of the adventure of Brom Bones with the Galloping Hessian, now quickened his steed, in hopes of leaving him behind The stranger, however, quickened his horse to an equal pace. Ichabod pulled up, and fell into a walk, thinking to lag behind—the other did the same His heart began to sink within him, he endeavored to resume his psalm tune, but his parched tongue clove to the roof of his mouth, and he could not utter a stave There was something in the moody and dogged silence of this pertinacious companion, that was mysterious and appalling It was soon fearfully accounted for On mounting a rising ground, which brought the figure of his fellow-traveller in relief against the sky, gigantic in height, and muffled in a cloak, Ichabod was horror-struck, on perceiving that he was headless!—but his horror was still more increased, on observing that the head, which should have rested on his shoulders, was carried before him on the pommel of the saddle his terror rose to desperation; he rained a shower of kicks and blows upon Gunpowder, hoping, by a sudden movement, to give his companion the slip—but the spectre started full jump with him. Away then they dashed, through thick and thin; stones flying, and sparks flashing at every bound Ichabod's flimsy garments fluttered in the air, as he stretched his long lank body away over his horse's head, in the cagerness of his flight.

They had now reached the road which turns off to Sleepy Hollow; but Gunpowder, who seemed possessed with a demon, instead of keeping up it, made an opposite turn, and plunged headlong down hill to the left. This road leads through a sandy hollow, shaded by trees for about a quarter of a mile, where it crosses the bridge famous in goblin story, and just beyond swells the green knoll on which stands the whitewashed church.

As yet the panic of the steed had given his unskilful rider an apparent advantage in the chase; but

just as he had got half way through the hollow, the girths of the saddle gave way, and he felt it slipping from under him. He seized it by the pommel, and endeavored to hold it firm, but in vain, and had just time to save himself by claspings old Gunpowder round the neck, when the saddle fell to the earth, and he heard it trampled under foot by his pursuer. For a moment the terror of Hans Van Ripper's wrath passed across his mind—for it was his Sunday saddle; but this was no time for petty fears; the goblin was 10 hard on his haunches; and (unskilful rider that he was!) he had much ado to maintain his seat, sometimes slipping on one side, sometimes on another, and sometimes jolted on the high ridge of his horse's back-bone, with a violence that he verily feared would cleave him asunder.

An opening in the trees now cheered him with the hopes that the church bridge was at hand. The wavering reflection of a silver star in the bosom of the brook told him that he was not mistaken. He saw 20 the walls of the church dimly glaring under the trees beyond. He recollected the place where Brom Bones's ghostly competitor had disappeared. "If I can but reach that bridge," thought Ichabod, "I am safe." Just then he heard the black steed panting and blowing close behind him; he even fancied that he felt his hot breath. Another convulsive kick in the ribs and old Gunpowder sprang upon the bridge, he thundered over the resounding planks, he gained the opposite side; and now Ichabod cast a look behind to see 30 if his pursuer should vanish, according to rule, in a flash of fire and brimstone. Just then he saw the goblin rising in his stirrups, and in the very act of hurling his head at him. Ichabod endeavored to dodge the horrible missile, but too late. It encountered his cranium with a tremendous crash—he was tumbled headlong into the dust, and Gunpowder, the black steed, and the goblin rider, passed by like a whirlwind.

The next morning the old horse was found without his saddle, and with the bridle under his feet, soberly 40 cropping the grass at his master's gate. Ichabod did not make his appearance at breakfast—dinner-hour came, but no Ichabod. The boys assembled at the school-house, and strolled idly about the banks of the brook; but no schoolmaster. Hans Van Ripper now began to feel some uneasiness about the fate of poor Ichabod, and his saddle. An inquiry was set on foot, and after diligent investigation they came upon his traces. In one part of the road leading to the

church was found the saddle trampled in the dirt, the tracks of horses' hoofs deeply dented in the road, and evidently at furious speed, were traced to the bridge, beyond which, on the bank of a broad part of the brook, where the water ran deep and black, was found the hat of the unfortunate Ichabod, and close beside it a shattered pumpkin.

The brook was searched, but the body of the schoolmaster was not to be discovered. Hans Van Ripper, as executor of his estate, examined the bundle which contained all his worldly effects. They consisted of two shirts and a half, two stocks for the neck; a pair or two of worsted stockings, an old pair of corduroy small-clothes; a rusty razor, a book of psalm tunes, full of dogs' ears, and a broken pitch-pipe. As to the books and furniture of the school-house, they belonged to the community, excepting Cotton Mather's History of Witchcraft, a New England Almanac, and a book of dreams and fortune-telling, in which last was a sheet of foolscap much scribbled and blotted in several fruitless attempts to make a copy of verses in honor of the heiress of Van Tassel. These magic books and the poetic scrawl were forthwith consigned to the flames by Hans Van Ripper; who from that time forward determined to send his children no more to school; observing, that he never knew any good come of this same reading and writing. Whatever money the schoolmaster possessed, and he had received his quarter's pay but a day or two before, he must have had about his person at the time of his disappearance.

The mysterious event caused much speculation at the church on the following Sunday. Knots of gazers and gossips were collected in the churchyard, at the bridge, and at the spot where the hat and pumpkin had been found. The stories of Brouwer, of Bones, and a whole budget of others, were called to mind; and when they had diligently considered them all, and compared them with the symptoms of the present case, they shook their heads, and came to the conclusion that Ichabod had been carried off by the galloping Hessian. As he was a bachelor, and in nobody's debt, nobody troubled his head any more about him. The school was removed to a different quarter of the hollow, and another pedagogue reigned in his stead.

It is true, an old farmer, who had been down to New York on a visit several years after, and from whom this account of the ghostly adventure was re-

ceived, brought home the intelligence that Ichabod Crane was still alive, that he had left the neighborhood, partly through fear of the goblin and Hans Van Ripper, and partly in mortification at having been suddenly dismissed by the heiress, that he had changed his quarters to a distant part of the country, had kept school and studied law at the same time, had been admitted to the bar, turned politician, electioneered, written for the newspapers, and finally had been made a justice of the Ten Pound Court.<sup>88</sup> 10 Brom Bones too, who shortly after his rival's disappearance conducted the blooming Katrina in triumph to the altar, was observed to look exceedingly knowing whenever the story of Ichabod was related, and always burst into a hearty laugh at the mention

<sup>88</sup> A court in which cases involving not more than ten pounds were settled

of the pumpkin, which led some to suspect that he knew more about the matter than he chose to tell.

The old country wives, however, who are the best judges of these matters, maintain to this day that Ichabod was spirited away by supernatural means, and it is a favorite story often told about the neighborhood round the winter evening fire. The bridge became more than ever an object of superstitious awe, and that may be the reason why the road has been altered of late years, so as to approach the church by the border of the mill-pond. The school-house being deserted, soon fell to decay, and was reported to be haunted by the ghost of the unfortunate pedagogue, and the ploughboy, loitering homeward of a still summer evening, has often fancied his voice at a distance, chanting a melancholy psalm tune among the tranquil solitudes of Sleepy Hollow.

FROM

### *Bracebridge Hall*

The Author

Worthy Reader:

On again taking pen in hand, I would fain make a few observations at the outset, by way of bespeaking a right understanding. The volumes which I have already published have met with a reception far beyond my most sanguine expectations. I would willingly attribute this to their intrinsic merits; but, in spite of the vanity of authorship, I cannot but be sensible that their success has, in a great measure, been owing to a less flattering cause. It has been a matter of marvel, to my European readers, that a 30 man from the wilds of America should express himself in tolerable English. I was looked upon as something new and strange in literature, a kind of demi-savage, with a feather in his hand, instead of on his head; and there was a curiosity to hear what such a being had to say about civilized society.<sup>89</sup>

This novelty is now at an end, and of course the feeling of indulgence which it produced. I must now expect to bear the scrutiny of sterner criticisms, and to be measured by the same standard of contempor- 40 ary writers; and the very favor shown to my previous writings, will cause these to be treated with the great-

<sup>89</sup> This paragraph is in Irving's best style of pleasant raillery

est rigor, as there is nothing for which the world is apt to punish a man more severely, than for having 20 been over-praised. On this head, therefore, I wish to forestall the censoriousness of the reader, and I entreat he will not think the worse of me for the many injudicious things that may have been said in my commendation.

I am aware that I often travel over beaten ground, and treat of subjects that have already been discussed by abler pens. Indeed, various authors have been mentioned as my models, to whom I should feel flattered if I thought I bore the slightest resemblance; but in truth I write after no model that I am conscious of, and I write with no idea of imitation or competition. In venturing occasionally on topics that have already been almost exhausted by English authors, I do it, not with the presumption of challenging a comparison, but with the hope that some new interest may be given to such topics, when discussed by the pen of a stranger.

If, therefore, I should sometimes be found dwelling with fondness on subjects trite and commonplace with the reader, I beg the circumstances under which I write may be kept in recollection. Having been born and brought up in a new country, yet educated from infancy in the literature of an old one, my mind was

early filled with historical and poetical associations, connected with places, and manners, and customs of Europe; but which could rarely be applied to those of my country. To a mind thus peculiarly prepared, the most ordinary objects and scenes, on arriving in Europe, are full of strange matter and interesting novelty. England is as classic ground to an American, as Italy is to an Englishman, and old London teems with as much historical association as mighty Rome.

Indeed, it is difficult to describe the whimsical medley of ideas that throng upon his mind on landing among English scenes. He for the first time sees a world about which he has been reading and thinking in every stage of his existence. The recollected ideas of infancy, youth, and manhood, of the nursery, the school, and the study, come swarming at once upon him, and his attention is distracted between great and little objects; each of which, perhaps, awakens an equally delightful train of remembrances.

But what especially attracts his notice, are these peculiarities which distinguish an old country and an old state of society from a new one. I have never yet grown familiar enough with the crumbling monuments of past ages, to blunt the intense interest with which I at first beheld them. Accustomed always to scenes where history was, in a manner, anticipation; where every thing in art was new and progressive, and pointed to the future rather than to the past; where, in short, the works of man gave no ideas but those of young existence, and prospective improvement; there was something inexpressibly touching in the sight of enormous piles of architecture, gray with antiquity, and sinking in decay. I cannot describe the mute but deep-felt enthusiasm with which I have contemplated a vast monastic ruin, like Tintern Abbey, buried in the bosom of a quiet valley, and shut up from the world, as though it had existed merely for itself; or a warren pile, like Conway Castle, standing in stern loneliness on its rocky height, a mere hollow yet threatening phantom of departed power. They spread a grand, and melancholy, and, to me, an unusual charm over the landscape; I for the first time beheld signs of national old age, and empire's decay, and proofs of the transient and perishing glories of art, amidst the ever-springing and reviving fertility of nature.

But, in fact, to me every thing was full of matter; the footsteps of history were every where to be

traced, and poetry had breathed over and sanctified the land. I experienced the delightful freshness of feeling of a child, to whom every thing is new. I pictured to myself a set of inhabitants and a mode of life for every habitation that I saw, from the aristocratical mansion, amidst the lordly repose of stately groves and solitary parks, to the straw-thatched cottage, with its scanty garden and its cherished woodbine. I thought I never could be sated with the sweetness of a country so completely carpeted with verdure, where every air breathed of the balmy pasture, and the honeysuckled hedge. I was continually coming upon some little document of poetry in the blossomed hawthorn, the daisy, the cowslip, the primrose, or some other simple object that has received a supernatural value from the muse. The first time that I heard the song of a nightingale, I was intoxicated more by the delicious crowd of remembered associations than by the melody of its notes, and I shall never forget the thrill of ecstasy with which I first saw the lark rise, almost from beneath my feet, and wing its musical flight up into the morning sky.

In this way I traversed England, a grown-up child, delighted by every object, great and small, and betraying a wondering ignorance, and simple enjoyment, that provoked many a stare and a smile from my wiser and more experienced fellow-travellers. Such too was the odd confusion of associations that kept breaking upon me as I first approached London. One of my earliest wishes had been to see this great metropolis. I had read so much about it in the earliest books put into my infant hands, and I had heard so much about it from those around me who had come from the "old countries," that I was familiar with the names of its streets and squares, and public places, before I knew those of my native city. It was, to me, the great centre of the world, round which every thing seemed to revolve. I recollect contemplating so wistfully, when a boy, a paltry little print of the Thames, and London Bridge, and St. Paul's, that was in front of an old magazine; and a picture of Kensington Gardens, with gentlemen in three-cornered hats and broad skirts, and ladies in hoops and lappets, that hung up in my bedroom, even the venerable cut of St. John's Gate, that has stood, time out of mind, in front of the Gentleman's Magazine, was not without its charms to me; and I envied the odd-looking little man that appeared to be loitering about its arches.

How then did my heart warm when the towers of Westminster Abbey were pointed out to me, rising above the rich groves of St James's Park, with a thin haze above their gray pinnacles! I could not behold this great mausoleum of what is most illustrious in our paternal history, without feeling my enthusiasm in a glow. With what eagerness did I explore every part of the metropolis! I was not content with those matters which occupy the dignified research of the learned traveller, I delighted to call up all the feelings of childhood, and to seek after those objects which had been the wonders of my infancy. London Bridge, so famous in nursery song, the far-famed monument, Gog and Magog, and the Lions in the Tower, all brought back many a recollection of infantine delight, and of good old beings, now no more, who had gossiped about them to my wondering ear. Nor was it without recurrence to childish interest that I first peeped into Mr. Newberry's shop, in St Paul's Church-yard, that fountain-head of literature. Mr. Newberry was the first that ever filled my infant mind with the idea of a great and good man. He published all the picture-books of the day; and, out of his abundant love for children, he charged "nothing for either papers or print, and only a penny-halfpenny for the binding!"

I have mentioned these circumstances, worthy reader, to show you the whimsical crowd of associations that are apt to beset my mind on mingling among European scenes. I hope they may, in some measure, plead my apology, should I be found harping upon stale and trivial themes, or indulging an over-fondness for anything antique and obsolete. I know it is the humour, not to say cant of the day, to run riot about old times, old books, old customs, and old buildings; with myself, however, as far as I have caught the contagion, the feeling is genuine. To a man from a young country, all old things are in a manner new, and he may surely be excused in being a little curious about antiquities, whose native land, unfortunately, cannot boast a single ruin.

Having been brought up, also, in the comparative simplicity of a republic, I am apt to be struck with even the ordinary circumstances incident to an aristocratical state of society. If, however, I should at any time amuse myself by pointing out some of the eccentricities, and some of the poetical characteristics of the latter, I would not be understood as pretending to decide upon its political merits. My only aim

is to paint characters and manners. I am no politician. The more I have considered the study of politics, the more I have found it full of perplexity, and I have contented myself, as I have in my religion, with the faith in which I was brought up, regulating my own conduct by its precepts, but leaving to abler heads the task of making converts.

I shall continue on, therefore, in the course hitherto pursued, looking at things poetically, rather than politically; describing them as they are, rather than pretending to point out how they should be; and endeavoring to see the world in as pleasant a light as circumstances will permit.

I have always had an opinion that much good might be done by keeping mankind in good-humour with one another. I may be wrong in my philosophy, but I shall continue to practice it until convinced of its fallacy. When I discover the world to be all that it has been represented by sneering cynics and whining poets, I will turn to and abuse it also, in the meanwhile, worthy reader, I hope you will not think lightly of me, because I cannot believe this to be so very bad a world as it is represented.

Thine truly,

Geoffrey Crayon.

1822

### *The Stout Gentleman*

A STAGE-COACH ROMANCE

*I'll cross it, though it blast me!*<sup>90</sup>

HAMLET

It was a rainy Sunday in the gloomy month of November. I had been detained, in the course of a journey, by a slight indisposition, from which I was recovering; but was still feverish, and obliged to keep within doors all day, in an inn of the small town of Derby.<sup>91</sup> A wet Sunday in a country inn!—whoever has had the luck to experience one can alone judge of my situation. The rain pattered against the casements; the bells tolled for church with a melancholy sound. I went to the windows in quest of something to amuse the eye; but it seemed as if I had been placed completely out of the reach of all amusement. The windows of my bedroom looked out among tiled roofs and stacks of chimneys, while those of my sit-

<sup>90</sup> *Hamlet*, I, i, 127.

<sup>91</sup> Town in north central England.

ting-room commanded a full view of the stable-yard I know of nothing more calculated to make a man sick of this world than a stable-yard on a rainy day. The place was littered with wet straw that had been kicked about by travellers and stable-boys. In one corner was a stagnant pool of water, surrounding an island of muck, there were several half-drowned fowls crowded together under a cart, among which was a miserable, crest-fallen cock, drenched out of all life and spirit, his drooping tail matted, as it were, into a single feather, along which the water trickled from his back, near the cart was a half-dozing cow, chewing the cud, and standing patiently to be rained on, with wreaths of vapor rising from her reeking hide; a wall-eyed horse, tired of the loneliness of the stable, was poking his spectral head out of a window, with the rain dripping on it from the eaves; an unhappy cur, chained to a doghouse hard by, uttered something every now and then, between a bark and a yelp; a drab of a kitchen wench tramped backwards and forwards through the yard in pattens, looking as sulky as the weather itself, every thing, in short, was comfortless and forlorn, excepting a crew of hardened ducks, assembled like boon companions round a puddle, and making a riotous noise over their liquor

I was lonely and listless, and wanted amusement. My room soon became insupportable. I abandoned it, and sought what is technically called the travellers'-room. This is a public room set apart at most inns for the accommodation of a class of wayfarers, called travellers, or riders, a kind of commercial knights-errant, who are incessantly scouring the kingdom on gigs, on horseback, or by coach. They are the only successors that I know of at the present day to the knights-errant of yore. They lead the same kind of roving, adventurous life, only changing the lance for a driving-whip, the buckler for a pattern-card, and the coat of mail for an upper Benjamin.<sup>92</sup> Instead of vindicating the charms of peerless beauty, they rove about, spreading the fame and standing of some substantial tradesman, or manufacturer, and are ready at any time to bargain in his name; it being the fashion nowadays to trade, instead of fight, with one another. As the rooms of the hostel, in the good old fighting times, would be hung round at night with the armor of way-worn warriors, such as coats of mail, falchions, and yawning helmets; so the travellers'-room is garnished with the harnessing of their successors, with

box-coats, whips of all kinds, spurs, garters, and oil-cloth covered hats

I was in hopes of finding some of these worthies to talk with, but was disappointed. There were, indeed, two or three in the room, but I could make nothing of them. One was just finishing his breakfast, quarrelling with his bread and butter, and huffing the waiter, another buttoned on a pair of garters, with many execrations at Boots<sup>93</sup> for not having cleaned his shoes well, a third sat drumming on the table with his fingers and looking at the rain as it streamed down the window-glass; they all appeared infected by the weather, and disappeared, one after the other, without exchanging a word.

I sauntered to the window, and stood gazing at the people, picking their way to church, with petticoats hoisted midleg high, and dripping umbrellas. The bell ceased to toll, and the streets became silent. I then amused myself with watching the daughters of a tradesman opposite, who, being confined to the house for fear of wetting their Sunday finery, played off their charms at the front windows, to fascinate the chance tenants of the inn. They at length were summoned away by a vigilant vinegar-faced mother, and I had nothing further from without to amuse me.

What was I to do to pass away the long-lived day? I was sadly nervous and lonely; and every thing about an inn seems calculated to make a dull day ten times duller. Old newspapers, smelling of beer and tobacco smoke, and which I had already read half a dozen times. Good-for-nothing books, that were worse than rainy weather. I bored myself to death with an old volume of the *Lady's Magazine*.<sup>94</sup> I read all the commonplace names of ambitious travellers scrawled on the panes of glass; the eternal families of the Smiths, and the Browns, and the Jacksons, and the Johnsons, and all the other sons, and I deciphered several scraps of fatiguing in-window poetry which I have met with in all parts of the world.

The day continued lowering and gloomy; the slovenly, ragged, spongy clouds drifted heavily along; there was no variety even in the rain: it was one dull, continued, monotonous patter—patter—patter, excepting that now and then I was enlivened by the idea of a brisk shower, from the rattling of the drops upon a passing umbrella.

<sup>93</sup> A servant or boy at an inn or hotel.

<sup>94</sup> Popular eighteenth-century magazine, edited for a time by Oliver Goldsmith.

<sup>92</sup> An overcoat, named after a tailor.

It was quite *refreshing* (if I may be allowed a hackneyed phrase of the day) when, in the course of the morning, a horn blew, and a stage-coach whirled through the street, with outside passengers stuck all over it, cowering under cotton umbrellas, and seethed together, and reeking with the steams of wet box-coats and upper Benjamins.

The sound brought out from their lurking-places a crew of vagabond boys, and vagabond dogs, and the carrot-headed hostler, and that nondescript animal cycloped Boots, and all the other vagabond race that infest the purlieus of an inn; but the bustle was transient, the coach again whirled on its way; and boy and dog, and hostler and Boots, all slunk back again to their holes; the street again became silent, and the rain continued to rain on. In fact, there was no hope of its clearing up; the barometer pointed to rainy weather; mine hostess' tortoise-shell cat sat by the fire washing her face, and rubbing her paws over her ears, and, on referring to the Almanac, I found a <sup>20</sup> direful prediction stretching from the top of the page to the bottom through the whole month, "expect—much—rain—about—this—time!"

I was dreadfully hipped. The hours seemed as if they would never creep by. The very ticking of the clock became irksome. At length the stillness of the house was interrupted by the ringing of a bell. Shortly after I heard the voice of a waiter at the bar: "The stout gentleman in No. 13, wants his breakfast. Tea and bread and butter, with ham and eggs; <sup>30</sup> the eggs not to be too much done."

In such a situation as mine, every incident is of importance. Here was a subject of speculation presented to my mind, and ample exercise for my imagination. I am prone to paint pictures to myself, and on this occasion I had some materials to work upon. Had the guest up stairs been mentioned as Mr. Smith, or Mr. Brown, or Mr. Jackson, or Mr. Johnson, or merely as "the gentleman in No. 13," it would have been a perfect blank to me. I should have <sup>40</sup> thought nothing of it; but "The stout gentleman!"—the very name had something in it of the picturesque. It at once gave the size; it embodied the personage to my mind's eye, and my fancy did the rest.

He was stout, or, as some term it, lusty; in all probability, therefore, he was advanced in life, some people expanding as they grow old. By his breakfasting rather late, and in his own room, he must be a

man accustomed to live at his ease, and above the necessity of early rising, no doubt a round, rosy, lusty old gentleman.

There was another violent ringing. The stout gentleman was impatient for his breakfast. He was evidently a man of importance; "well to do in the world," accustomed to be promptly waited upon; of a keen appetite, and a little cross when hungry; "perhaps," thought I, "he may be some London Alderman; or who knows but he may be a Member of Parliament?"

The breakfast was sent up, and there was a short interval of silence, he was, doubtless, making the tea. Presently there was a violent ringing; and before it could be answered, another ringing still more violent. "Bless me! what a choleric old gentleman!" The waiter came down in a huff. The butter was rancid, the eggs were over-done, the ham was too salt,—the stout gentleman was evidently nice in his eating; one of those who eat and growl, and keep the waiter on the trot, and live in a state militant with the household.

The hostess got into a fume. I should observe that she was a brisk, coquettish woman; a little of a shrew, and something of a slammerkin,<sup>95</sup> but very pretty withal; with a nincompoop<sup>96</sup> for a husband, as shrews are apt to have. She rated the servants roundly for their negligence in sending up so bad a breakfast, but said not a word against the stout gentleman; by which I clearly perceived that he must be a man of consequence, entitled to make a noise and to give trouble at a country inn. Other eggs, and ham, and bread and butter were sent up. They appeared to be more graciously received; at least there was no further complaint.

I had not made many turns about the travellers'-room, when there was another ringing. Shortly afterwards there was a stir and an inquest about the house. The stout gentleman wanted the *Times*<sup>97</sup> or the *Chronicle*<sup>98</sup> newspaper. I set him down, therefore, for a whig; or rather, from his being so absolute and lordly where he had a chance, I suspected him of being a radical. Hunt, I had heard, was a large man; "who knows," thought I, "but it is Hunt himself!"

My curiosity began to be awakened. I inquired of the waiter who was this stout gentleman that was

<sup>95</sup> Slovenly, shabby, untidy woman.

<sup>96</sup> Slang for a silly or stupid person.

<sup>97</sup> *The London Times*.

<sup>98</sup> *The Morning Chronicle* (London).



making all this stir, but I could get no information nobody seemed to know his name. The landlords of bustling inns seldom trouble their heads about the names or occupations of their transient guests. The color of a coat, the shape or size of the person, is enough to suggest a travelling name. It is either the tall gentleman, or the short gentleman, or the gentleman in black, or the gentleman in snuff-color; or, as in the present instance, the stout gentleman. A designation of the kind once hit on answers every <sup>10</sup> purpose, and saves all further inquiry.

Rain—rain—rain! pitiless, ceaseless rain! No such thing as putting a foot out of doors, and no occupation nor amusement within. By and by I heard some one walking over head. It was in the stout gentleman's room. He evidently was a large man by the heaviness of his tread, and an old man from his wearing such creaking solcs. "He is doubtless," thought I, "some rich old square-toes of regular habits, and is now taking exercise after breakfast"

I now read all the advertisement of coaches and hotels that were stuck about the mantelpiece. The Lady's Magazine had become an abomination to me; it was as tedious as the day itself. I wandered out, not knowing what to do, and ascended again to my room. I had not been there long, when there was a squall from a neighboring bedroom. A door opened and slammed violently; a chambermaid, that I had remarked for having a ruddy, good-humored face, went down stairs in a violent flurry. The stout gentleman <sup>30</sup> had been rude to her!

This sent a whole host of my deductions to the deuce in a moment. This unknown personage could not be an old gentleman; for old gentlemen are not apt to be so obstreperous to chambermaids. He could not be a young gentleman; for young gentlemen are not apt to inspire such indignation. He must be a middle-aged man, and confounded ugly into the bargain, or the girl would not have taken the matter in such terrible dudgeon. I confess I was sorely puzzled. <sup>40</sup>

In a few minutes I heard the voice of my landlady. I caught a glance of her as she came tramping up stairs; her face glowing, her cap flaring, her tongue wagging the whole way. "She'd have no such doings in her house, she'd warrant. If gentlemen did spend money freely, it was no rule. She'd have no servant maids of hers treated in that way, when they were about their work, that's what she wouldn't."

As I hate squabbles, particularly with women, and above all with pretty women, I slunk back into my room, and partly closed the door, but my curiosity was too much excited not to listen. The landlady marched intrepidly to the enemy's citadel, and entered it with a storm. the door closed after her. I heard her voice in high windy clamor for a moment or two. Then it gradually subsided, like a gust of wind in a garret; then there was a laugh, then I heard nothing more.

After a little while my landlady came out with an odd smile on her face, adjusting her cap, which was a little on one side. As she went down stairs, I heard the landlord ask her what was the matter; she said, "Nothing at all, only the girl's a fool."—I was more than ever perplexed what to make of this unaccountable personage, who could put a good-natured chambermaid in a passion, and send away a termagant landlady in smiles. He could not be so old, nor cross, <sup>20</sup> nor ugly either.

I had to go to work at his picture again, and to paint him entirely different. I now set him down for one of those stout gentlemen that are frequently met with swaggering about the doors of country inns. Moist, merry fellows, in Belcher handkerchiefs,<sup>99</sup> whose bulk is a little assisted by malt-liquors. Men who have seen the world, and been sworn at Highgate; who are used to tavern life, up to all the tricks of tapsters, and knowing in the ways of sinful publicans. Free-livers on a small scale, who are prodigal within the compass of a guinea, who call all the waiters by name, touzle the maids, gossip with the landlady at the bar, and prose over a pint of port, or a glass of negus,<sup>100</sup> after dinner.

The morning wore away in forming these and similar surmises. As fast as I wove one system of belief, some movement of the unknown would completely overturn it, and throw all my thoughts again into confusion. Such are the solitary operations of a feverish mind. I was, as I have said, extremely nervous, and the continual meditation on the concerns of this invisible personage began to have its effect:—I was getting a fit of the fidgets.

Dinner-time came. I hoped the stout gentleman might dine in the travellers'-room, and that I might

<sup>99</sup> Large blue neckerchiefs.

<sup>100</sup> A drink of wine, hot water, sugar, nutmeg, and lemon juice.

at length get a view of his person, but no—he had dinner served in his own room. What could be the meaning of this solitude and mystery? He could not be a radical, there was something too aristocratical in thus keeping himself apart from the rest of the world, and condemning himself to his own dull company throughout a rainy day. And then, too, he lived too well for a discontented politician. He seemed to expatiate on a variety of dishes, and to sit over his wine like a jolly friend of good living. Indeed, my doubts on this head were soon at an end; for he could not have finished his first bottle before I could faintly hear him humming a tune; and on listening, I found it to be “God save the King.” ’Twas plain, then, he was no radical, but a faithful subject, one who grew loyal over his bottle, and was ready to stand by king and constitution, when he could stand by nothing else. But who could he be? My conjectures began to run wild. Was he not some personage of distinction travelling incog? “God knows!” said I, at my wit’s end; “it may be one of the royal family for aught I know, for they are all stout gentlemen!”

The weather continued rainy. The mysterious unknown kept his room, and, as far as I could judge, his chair, for I did not hear him move. In the meantime, as the day advanced, the travellers’-room began to be frequented. Some, who had just arrived, came in buttoned-up in box-coats; others came home who had been dispersed about the town; some took their dinners, and some their tea. Had I been in a different mood, I should have found entertainment in studying this peculiar class of men. There were two especially, who were regular wags of the road, and up to all the standing jokes of travellers. They had a thousand sly things to say to the waiting-maid, whom they called Louisa, and Ethelinda, and a dozen other fine names, changing the name every time, and chuckling amazingly at their own waggy. My mind, however, had been completely engrossed by the stout gentleman. He had kept my fancy in chase during a long day, and it was not now to be diverted from the scent.

The event gradually wore away. The travellers read the papers two or three times over. Some drew round the fire and told long stories about their horses, about their adventures, their overturns, and breakings down. They discussed the credit of different merchants and different inns; and the two wags told several choice

anecdotes of pretty chambermaids, and kind landladies. All this passed as they were quietly taking what they called their night-caps, that is to say, strong glasses of brandy and water and sugar, or some other mixture of the kind, after which they one after another rang for “Boots” and the chambermaid, and walked off to bed in old shoes cut down into marvelously uncomfortable slippers.

There was now only one man left, a short-legged, long-bodied, plethoric fellow, with a very large, sandy head. He sat by himself, with a glass of port wine negus, and a spoon, sipping and stirring, and meditating and sipping, until nothing was left but the spoon. He gradually fell asleep bolt upright in his chair, with the empty glass standing before him, and the candle seemed to fall asleep too, for the wick grew long, and black, and cabbaged at the end, and dimmed the little light that remained in the chamber. The gloom that now prevailed was contagious. Around hung the shapeless, and almost spectral, box-coats of departed travellers, long since buried in deep sleep. I only heard the ticking of the clock, with the deep-drawn breathings of the sleeping toppers, and the drippings of the rain, drop—drop—drop, from the eaves of the house. The church bells chimed midnight. All at once the stout gentleman began to walk over head, pacing slowly backwards and forwards. There was something extremely awful in all this, especially to one in my state of nerves. These ghastly great-coats, these guttural breathings, and the creaking footsteps of this mysterious being. His steps grew fainter and fainter, and at length died away. I could bear it no longer. I was wound up to the desperation of a hero of romance. “Be he who or what he may,” said I to myself, “I’ll have a sight of him!” I seized a chamber candle, and hurried up to No. 13. The door stood ajar. I hesitated—I entered the room was deserted. There stood a large, broad-bottomed elbow-chair at a table, on which was an empty tumbler, and a “Times” newspaper, and the room smelt powerfully of Stilton cheese.<sup>101</sup>

The mysterious stranger had evidently but just retired. I turned off, sorely disappointed, to my room, which had been changed to the front of the house. As I went along the corridor, I saw a large pair of boots, with dirty, waxed tops, standing at the door of a bedchamber. They doubtless belonged to the un-

<sup>101</sup> One of the principal English cheeses.

known, but it would not do to disturb so redoubtable a personage in his den, he might discharge a pistol, or something worse, at my head. I went to bed, therefore, and lay awake half the night in a terribly nervous state; and even when I fell asleep, I was still haunted in my dreams by the idea of the stout gentleman and his wax-topped boots.

I slept rather late the next morning, and was awakened by some stir and bustle in the house, which I could not at first comprehend, until getting more awake, I found there was a mail coach starting from the door. Suddenly there was a cry from below, "The gentleman has forgot his umbrella! look for the gentleman's umbrella in No. 13!" I heard an imme-

diately scampering of a chambermaid along the passage, and a shrill reply as she ran, "Here it is! here's the gentleman's umbrella!"

The mysterious stranger then was on the point of setting off. This was the only chance I should ever have of knowing him. I sprang out of bed, scrambled to the window, snatched aside the curtains, and just caught a glimpse of the rear of a person getting in at the coach-door. The skirts of a brown coat parted behind, and gave me a full view of the broad disk of a pair of drab breeches. The door closed—"all right!" was the word—the coach whirled off—and that was all I ever saw of the stout gentleman!

1822

FROM

*Tales of a Traveller* <sup>102</sup>

To the Reader

Worthy and Dear Reader!—Hast thou ever been waylaid in the midst of a pleasant tour by some treacherous malady: thy heels tripped up, and thou left to count the tedious minutes as they passed, in the solitude of an inn chamber? If thou hast, thou wilt be able to pity me. Behold me, interrupted in the course of my journeying up the fair banks of the Rhine, and laid up by indisposition in this old frontier town of Mentz. I have worn out every source of amusement. I know the sound of every clock that strikes, and bell that rings, in the place. I know to a second when to listen for the first tap of the Prussian drum, as it summons the garrison to parade, or at what hour to expect the distant sound of the Austrian military band. All these have grown wearisome to me; and even the well-known step of my doctor, as he slowly paces the corridor, with healing in the creak of his shoes, no longer affords an agreeable interruption to the monotony of my apartment.

For a time I attempted to beguile the weary hours, by studying German under the tuition of mine host's pretty little daughter, Katrine; but I soon found even

German had not power to charm a languid ear, and that the conjugating of *ich liebe* might be powerless, however rosy the lips which uttered it.

I tried to read, but my mind would not fix itself. I turned over volume after volume, but threw them by with distaste. "Well, then," said I at length, in despair, "if I cannot read a book, I will write one." Never was there a more lucky idea, it at once gave me occupation and amusement. The writing of a book was considered in old times as an enterprise of toil and difficulty, insomuch that the most trifling lucubration was denominated a "work," and the world talked with awe and reverence of "the labors of the learned"—These matters are better understood nowadays.

Thanks to the improvements in all kind of manufactures, the art of book-making has been made familiar to the meanest capacity. Everybody is an author. The scribbling of a quarto is the mere pastime of the idle; the young gentleman throws off his brace of duodecimos in the intervals of the sporting season, and the young lady produces her set of volumes with the same facility that her great-grandmother worked a set of chair-bottoms.

The idea having struck me, therefore, to write a book, the reader will easily perceive that the execution of it was no difficult matter. I rummaged my portfolio, and cast about, in my recollection, for those floating materials which a man naturally collects in

<sup>102</sup> Published in London by Murray in two parts, August 25, 1824. In New York, it was published in four installments between August 24 and October 9, 1824, the first part consisting of "Strange Stories by a Nervous Gentleman"; the second, of "Buckthorne and His Friends"; the third, of "The Italian Banditti"; and the fourth, of "The Money Diggers."

travelling, and here I have arranged them in this little work

As I know this to be a story-telling and a story-reading age, and that the world is fond of being taught by apologue, I have digested the instruction I would convey into a number of tales. They may not possess the power of amusement, which the tales told by many of my contemporaries possess, but then I value myself on the sound moral which each of them contains.<sup>103</sup> This may not be apparent at first, but the reader will be sure to find it out in the end. I am for curing the world by gentle alternatives, not by violent doses; indeed, the patient should never be conscious that he is taking a dose. I have learnt this much from experience under the hands of the worthy Hippocrates of Mentz.

I am not, therefore, for those barefaced tales which carry their moral on the surface, staring one in the face, they are enough to deter the squeamish reader. On the contrary, I have often hid my moral from sight, and disguised it as much as possible by sweets and spices, so that while the simple reader is listening with open mouth to a ghost or a love story, he may have a bolus of sound morality popped down his throat, and be never the wiser for the fraud.

As the public is apt to be curious about the sources whence an author draws his stories, doubtless that it may know how far to put faith in them, I would observe, that the *Adventure of the German Student*, or rather the latter part of it, is founded on an anecdote related to me as existing somewhere in French; and, indeed, I have been told, since writing it, that an ingenious tale has been founded on it by an English writer; but I have never met with either the former or the latter in print. Some of the circumstances in the *Adventure of the Mysterious Picture*, and in the *Story of the Young Italian*, are vague recollections of anecdotes related to me some years since; but from what source derived, I do not know. The *Adventure of the Young Painter among the banditti* is taken almost entirely from an authentic narrative in manuscript.

As to the other tales contained in this work, and indeed to my tales generally, I can make but one

<sup>103</sup> Many years later Irving had a good laugh out of a flattering review of his works, in which it was asserted: "His most comical pieces have always a serious end in view." "You laugh," said Irving to his nephew, with that air of whimsical significance so natural to him, "but it is true, I have kept that to myself hitherto, but that man has found me out. He has detected the moral of the 'Stout Gentleman.'"

observation, I am an old traveller, I have read somewhat, heard and seen more, and dreamt more than all. My brain is filled, therefore, with all kinds of odds and ends. In travelling, these heterogeneous matters have become shaken up in my mind, as the articles are apt to be in an ill-packed travelling trunk; so that when I attempt to draw forth a fact, I cannot determine whether I have read, heard, or dreamt it; and I am always at a loss to know how much to believe of my own stories.<sup>104</sup>

These matters being premised, fall to, worthy reader, with good appetite, and, above all, with good humor, to what is here set before thee. If the tales I have furnished should prove to be bad, they will at least be found short, so that no one will be wearied long on the same theme. "Variety is charming," as some poet observes.

There is a certain relief in change, even though it be from bad to worse! As I have often found in travelling in a stage-coach, that it is often a comfort to shift one's position, and be bruised in a new place.

Ever thine,

Geoffrey Crayon.

*Dated from the HOTEL DE DARMSTADT,*

*ci-devant HOTEL DE PARIS,*

*MENTZ, otherwise called MAYENCE.*

### *Adventure of the German Student*

On a stormy night, in the tempestuous times of the French revolution, a young German was returning to his lodgings, at a late hour, across the old part of Paris. The lightning gleamed, and the loud claps of thunder rattled through the lofty narrow streets—but I should first tell you something about this young German.

Gottfried Wolfgang was a young man of good family. He had studied for some time at Gottingen, but being of a visionary and enthusiastic character, he had wandered into those wild and speculative doctrines which have so often bewildered German students. His secluded life, his intense application, and the singular nature of his studies, had an effect on both mind and body. His health was impaired; his imagination diseased. He had been indulging in fanciful speculations on spiritual essences, until, like Swedenborg, he had an ideal world of his own around

<sup>104</sup> Characteristic of Irving's playful and disarmingly naive approach to any question regarding the sources of his tales.

him. He took up a notion, I do not know from what cause, that there was an evil influence hanging over him, an evil genius or spirit seeking to ensnare him and ensure his perdition. Such an idea working on his melancholy temperament, produced the most gloomy effects. He became haggard and desponding. His friends discovered the mental malady preying upon him, and determined that the best cure was a change of scene; he was sent, therefore, to finish his studies amidst the splendors and gayeties of Paris.

Wolfgang arrived at Paris at the breaking out of the revolution. The popular delirium at first caught his enthusiastic mind, and he was captivated by the political and philosophical theories of the day; but the scenes of blood which followed shocked his sensitive nature, disgusted him with society and the world, and made him more than ever a recluse. He shut himself up in a solitary apartment in the *Pays Latin*,<sup>105</sup> the quarter of students. There, in a gloomy street not far from the monastic walls of the Sorbonne,<sup>106</sup> he pursued his favorite speculations. Sometimes he spent hours together in the great libraries of Paris, those catacombs of departed authors, rummaging among their hoards of dusty and obsolete works in quest of food for his unhealthy appetite. He was, in a manner, a literary ghoul, feeding in the charnel-house of decayed literature.

Wolfgang, though solitary and recluse, was of an ardent temperament, but for a time it operated merely upon his imagination. He was too shy and ignorant of the world to make any advances to the fair, but he was a passionate admirer of female beauty, and in his lonely chamber would often lose himself in reveries on forms and faces which he had seen, and his fancy would deck out images of loveliness far surpassing the reality.

While his mind was in this excited and sublimated state, a dream produced an extraordinary effect upon him. It was of a female face of transcendent beauty. So strong was the impression made, that he dreamt of it again and again. It haunted his thoughts by day, his slumbers by night, in fine, he became passionately enamoured of this shadow of a dream. This lasted so long that it became one of those fixed ideas which haunt the minds of melancholy men, and are at times mistaken for madness.

<sup>105</sup> The Latin quarter in Paris, frequented by students and artists.

<sup>106</sup> Famous university in Paris.

Such was Gottfried Wolfgang, and such his situation at the time I mentioned. He was returning home late one stormy night, through some of the old and gloomy streets of the *Marais*, the ancient part of Paris. The loud claps of thunder rattled among the high houses of the narrow streets. He came to the Place de Grève, the square where public executions are performed. The lightning quivered about the pinnacles of the ancient Hôtel de Ville, and shed flickering gleams over the open space in front. As Wolfgang was crossing the square, he shrank back with horror at finding himself close by the guillotine. It was the height of the reign of terror, when this dreadful instrument of death stood ever ready, and its scaffold was continually running with the blood of the virtuous and the brave. It had that very day been actively employed in the work of carnage, and there it stood in grim array, amidst a silent and sleeping city, waiting for fresh victims.

Wolfgang's heart sickened within him, and he was turning shuddering from the horrible engine, when he beheld a shadowy form, cowering as it were at the foot of the steps which led up to the scaffold. A succession of vivid flashes of lightning revealed it more distinctly. It was a female figure, dressed in black. She was seated on one of the lower steps of the scaffold, leaning forward, her face hid in her lap, and her long dishevelled tresses hanging to the ground, streaming with the rain which fell in torrents. Wolfgang paused. There was something awful in this solitary monument of woe. The female had the appearance of being above the common order. He knew the times to be full of vicissitude, and that many a fair head, which had once been pillowed on down, now wandered houseless. Perhaps this was some poor mourner whom the dreadful axe had rendered desolate, and who sat here heart-broken on the strand of existence, from which all that was dear to her had been launched into eternity.

He approached, and addressed her in the accents of sympathy. She raised her head and gazed wildly at him. What was his astonishment at beholding, by the bright glare of the lightning, the very face which had haunted him in his dreams. It was pale and desolate, but ravishingly beautiful.

Trembling with violent and conflicting emotions, Wolfgang again accosted her. He spoke something of her being exposed at such an hour of the night, and to the fury of such a storm, and offered to conduct

her to her friends. She pointed to the guillotine with a gesture of dreadful signification.

"I have no friend on earth!" said she.

"But you have a home," said Wolfgang.

"Yes—in the grave!"

The heart of the student melted at the words.

"If a stranger dare make an offer," said he, "without danger of being misunderstood, I would offer my humble dwelling as a shelter, myself as a devoted friend. I am friendless myself in Paris, and a stranger in the land; but if my life could be of service, it is at your disposal, and should be sacrificed before harm or indignity should come to you."

There was an honest earnestness in the young man's manner that had its effect. His foreign accent, too, was in his favor; it showed him not to be a hackneyed inhabitant of Paris. Indeed, there is an eloquence in true enthusiasm that is not to be doubted. The homeless stranger confided herself implicitly to the protection of the student.

He supported her faltering steps across the Pont Neuf,<sup>107</sup> and by the place where the statue of Henry the Fourth had been overthrown by the populace. The storm had abated, and the thunder rumbled at a distance. All Paris was quiet; that great volcano of human passion slumbered for a while, to gather fresh strength for the next day's eruption. The student conducted his charge through the ancient streets of the *Pays Latin*, and by the dusky walls of the Sorbonne, to the great dingy hotel which he inhabited. The old portress who admitted them stared with surprise at the unusual sight of the melancholy Wolfgang with a female companion.

On entering his apartment, the student, for the first time, blushed at the scantiness and indifference of his dwelling. He had but one chamber—an old-fashioned saloon—heavily carved, and fantastically furnished with the remains of former magnificence, for it was one of those hotels in the quarter of the Luxembourg palace, which had once belonged to nobility. It was lumbered with books and papers, and all the usual apparatus of a student, and his bed stood in a recess at one end.

When lights were brought, and Wolfgang had a better opportunity of contemplating the stranger, he was more than ever intoxicated by her beauty. Her face was pale, but of a dazzling fairness, set off by a profusion of raven hair that hung clustering about it.

<sup>107</sup> A famous bridge over the Seine in Paris.

Her eyes were large and brilliant, with a singular expression approaching almost to wildness. As far as her black dress permitted her shape to be seen, it was of perfect symmetry. Her whole appearance was highly striking, though she was dressed in the simplest style. The only thing approaching to an ornament which she wore, was a broad black band round her neck, clasped by diamonds.

The perplexity now commenced with the student how to dispose of the helpless being thus thrown upon his protection. He thought of abandoning his chamber to her, and seeking shelter for himself elsewhere. Still he was so fascinated by her charms, there seemed to be such a spell upon his thoughts and senses, that he could not tear himself from her presence. Her manner, too, was singular and unaccountable. She spoke no more of the guillotine. Her grief had abated. The attentions of the student had first won her confidence, and then, apparently, her heart. She was evidently an enthusiast like himself, and enthusiasts soon understood each other.

In the infatuation of the moment, Wolfgang avowed his passion for her. He told her the story of his mysterious dream, and how she had possessed his heart before he had even seen her. She was strangely affected by his recital, and acknowledged to have felt an impulse towards him equally unaccountable. It was the time for wild theory and wild actions. Old prejudices and superstitions were done away, every thing was under the sway of the "Goddess of Reason." Among other rubbish of the old times, the forms and ceremonies of marriage began to be considered superfluous bonds for honorable minds. Social compacts were the vogue. Wolfgang was too much of a theorist not to be tainted by the liberal doctrines of the day.

"Why should we separate?" said he: "our hearts are united, in the eye of reason and honor we are as one. What need is there of sordid forms to bind high souls together?"

The stranger listened with emotion. She had evidently received illumination at the same school.

"You have no home nor family," continued he; "let me be every thing to you, or rather let us be every thing to one another. If form is necessary, form shall be observed—there is my hand. I pledge myself to you for ever."

"For ever?" said the stranger, solemnly.

"For ever!" repeated Wolfgang.

The stranger clasped the hand extended to her "then I am yours," murmured she, and sank upon his bosom.

The next morning the student left his bride sleeping, and sallied forth at an early hour to seek more spacious apartments suitable to the change in his situation. When he returned, he found the stranger lying with her head hanging over the bed, and one arm thrown over it. He spoke to her, but received no reply. He advanced to awaken her from her uncasy posture. On taking her hand, it was cold—there was no pulsation—her face was pallid and ghastly—In a word she was a corpse.

Horrified and frantic, he alarmed the house. A scene of confusion ensued. The police was summoned. As the officer of police entered the room, he started back on beholding the corpse.

"Good heaven!" cried he, "how did this woman come here?"

"Do you know anything about her?" said Wolfgang, eagerly.

"Do I?" exclaimed the officer "she was guillotined yesterday."

He stepped forward, undid the black collar round the neck of the corpse, and the head rolled on the floor!

The student burst into a frenzy. "The fiend! the fiend has gained possession of me!" shrieked he. "I am lost for ever!"

They tried to soothe him, but in vain. He was possessed with the frightful belief that an evil spirit had animated the dead body to ensnare him. He went distracted, and died in a mad-house.

Here the old gentleman with the haunted head finished his narrative.

"And is this really a fact?" said the inquisitive gentleman.

"A fact not to be doubted," replied the other. "I had it from the best authority. The student told it me himself. I saw him in a mad-house in Paris."<sup>108</sup>

FROM

### *The Alhambra*<sup>109</sup>

#### *Legend of the Arabian Astrologer*

In old times, many hundred years ago, there was a Moorish king named Aben Habuz, who reigned over the kingdom of Granada. He was a retired conqueror, that is to say, one who having in his more youthful days led a life of constant foray and depredation, now that he was grown feeble and superannuated, "languished for repose," and desired nothing more than to live at peace with all the world, to husband his laurels, and to enjoy in quiet the possessions he had wrested from his neighbors.

It so happened, however, that this most reasonable and pacific old monarch had young rivals to deal with; princes full of his early passion for fame and fighting, and who were disposed to call him to account for the

scores he had run up with their fathers. Certain distant districts of his own territories, also, which during the days of his vigor he had treated with a high hand, were prone, now that he languished for repose, to rise in rebellion and threaten to invest him in his capital. Thus he had foes on every side; and as Granada is surrounded by wild and craggy mountains, which hide the approach of an enemy, the unfortunate Aben Habuz was kept in a constant state of vigilance and alarm, not knowing in what quarter hostilities might break out.

It was in vain that he built watchtowers on the mountains, and stationed guards at every pass with orders to make fires by night and smoke by day, on the approach of an enemy. His alert foes, baffling every precaution, would break out of some unthought-

<sup>108</sup> This caper at the end of Irving's tales is typical.

<sup>109</sup> Published originally in 1832. In 1851 Irving rearranged and revised the whole as it now stands in the "Author's Revised Edition," which this selection follows.

The Alhambra is a splendid medieval palace of the Moorish kings built on a hill overlooking Granada in southern Spain. Moorish power began to decline in the twelfth century, and toward the end of the fifteenth century the whole of southern

Spain fell into the hands of Ferdinand and Isabella. Irving's residence in the Alhambra from April to July of 1829 enabled him to indulge fully his antiquarian interests. He gathered much legendary and historical material from old manuscripts as well as from verbal sources. *The Alhambra* (1832), his most romantic production, was the result. The "Legend of the Arabian Astrologer" is typical of the arabesque contents of the book.

of defile, ravage his lands beneath his very nose, and then make off with prisoners and booty to the mountains. Was ever peaccable and retued conqueror in a more uncomfortable predicament?

While Aben Habuz was harassed by these perplexities and molestations, an ancient Arabian physician arrived at his court. His gray beard descended to his girdle, and he had every mark of extreme age, yet he had travelled almost the whole way from Egypt on foot, with no other aid than a staff, marked with hieroglyphics. His fame had preceded him. His name was Ibrahim Ebn Abu Ayub, he was said to have lived ever since the days of Mahomet, and to be son of Abu Ayub, the last of the companions of the Prophet. He had, when a child, followed the conquering army of Amur into Egypt, where he had remained many years studying the dark sciences, and particularly magic, among the Egyptian priests.

It was, moreover, said that he had found out the secret of prolonging life, by means of which he had arrived to the great age of upwards of two centuries, though, as he did not discover the secret until well stricken in years, he could only perpetuate his gray hairs and wrinkles.

This wonderful old man was honorably entertained by the king; who, like most superannuated monarchs, began to take physicians into great favor. He would have assigned him an apartment in his palace, but the astrologer preferred a cave in the side of the hill which rises above the city of Granada, being the same on which the Alhambra has since been built. He caused the cave to be enlarged so as to form a spacious and lofty hall, with a circular hole at the top, through which, as through a well, he could see the heavens and behold the stars even at mid-day. The walls of this hall were covered with Egyptian hieroglyphics with cabalistic symbols, and with the figures of the stars in their signs. This hall he furnished with many implements, fabricated under his directions by cunning artificers of Granada, but the occult properties of which were known only to himself.

In a little while the sage Ibrahim became the bosom counsellor of the king, who applied to him for advice in every emergency. Aben Habuz was once inveighing against the injustice of his neighbors, and bemoaning the restless vigilance he had to observe to guard himself against their invasions; when he had finished, the astrologer remained silent for a moment,

and then replied, "Know, O king, that when I was in Egypt I beheld a great marvel devised by a pagan priestess of old. On a mountain, above the city of Borsa, and overlooking the great valley of the Nile, was a figure of a ram, and above it a figure of a cock, both of molten brass, and turning upon a pivot. Whenever the country was threatened with invasion, the ram would turn in the direction of the enemy, and the cock would crow, upon this the inhabitants of the city knew of the danger, and of the quarter from which it was approaching, and could take timely means to guard against it."

"God is great!" exclaimed the pacific Aben Habuz, "what a treasure would be such a ram to keep an eye upon these mountains around me, and then such a cock, to crow in time of danger! Allah Akbar! how securely I might sleep in my palace with such sentinels on the top!"

The astrologer waited until the ecstasies of the king had subsided, and then proceeded

"After the victorious Amru (may he rest in peace!) had finished his conquest of Egypt, I remained among the priests of the land, studying the rites and ceremonies of their idolatrous faith, and seeking to make myself master of the hidden knowledge for which they are renowned. I was one day seated on the banks of the Nile, conversing with an ancient priest, when he pointed to the mighty pyramids which rose like mountains out of the neighboring desert. 'All that we can teach thee,' said he, 'is nothing to the knowledge locked up in those mighty piles. In the centre of the central pyramid is a sepulchral chamber, in which is enclosed the mummy of the high-priest, who aided in rearing that stupendous pile; and with him is buried a wondrous book of knowledge containing all the secrets of magic and art. This book was given to Adam after his fall, and was handed down from generation to generation to King Solomon the wise, and by its aid he built the temple of Jerusalem. How it came into the possession of the builder of the pyramids, is known to him alone who knows all things.'

"When I heard these words of the Egyptian priest, my heart burned to get possession of that book. I could command the services of many of the soldiers of our conquering army, and of a number of the native Egyptians: with these I set to work, and pierced the solid mass of the pyramid, until, after great toil, I came upon one of its interior and hidden passages.



Following this up, and threading a fearful labyrinth, I penetrated into the very heart of the pyramid, even to the sepulchral chamber, where the mummy of the high-priest had lain for ages. I broke through the outer cases of the mummy, unfolded its many wrappers and bandages, and at length found the precious volume on its bosom. I seized it with a trembling hand, and groped my way out of the pyramid, leaving the mummy in its dark and silent sepulchre, there to await the final day of resurrection and judgment."

"Son of Abu Ayub," exclaimed Aben Habuz, "thou hast been a great traveller, and seen marvellous things; but of what avail to me is the secret of the pyramid, and the volume of knowledge of the wise Solomon?"

"This it is, O king! By the study of that book I am instructed in all magic arts, and can command the assistance of genii to accomplish my plans. The mystery of the Talisman of Borsa is therefore familiar to me, and such a talisman can I make; nay, one of greater virtues."

"O wise son of Abu Ayub," cried Aben Habuz, "better were such a talisman, than all the watch-towers on the hills, and sentinels upon the borders. Give me such a safeguard, and the riches of my treasury are at thy command."

The astrologer immediately set to work to gratify the wishes of the monarch. He caused a great tower to be erected upon the top of the royal palace, which stood on the brow of the hill of the Albaycin. The tower was built of stones brought from Egypt, and taken, it is said, from one of the pyramids. In the upper part of the tower was a circular hall, with windows looking towards every point of the compass, and before each window was a table, on which was arranged, as on a chess-board, a mimic army of horse and foot, with the effigy of the potentate that ruled in that direction, all carved of wood. To each of these tables there was a small lance, no bigger than a bodkin, on which were engraved certain Chaldaic characters. This hall was kept constantly closed, by a gate of brass, with a great lock of steel, the key of which was in possession of the king.

On the top of the tower was a bronze figure of a Moonsh horseman, fixed on a pivot, with a shield on one arm, and his lance elevated perpendicularly. The face of this horseman was towards the city, as if keeping guard over it; but if any foe were at hand, the

figure would turn in that direction, and would level the lance as if for action.

When this talisman was finished, Aben Habuz was all impatient to try its virtues, and longed as ardently for an invasion as he had ever sighed after repose. His desire was soon gratified. Tidings were brought, early one morning, by the sentinel appointed to watch the tower, that the face of the bronze horseman was turned towards the mountains of Elvira, and that his lance pointed directly against the Pass of Lope.

"Let the drums and trumpets sound to arms, and all Granada be put on the alert," said Aben Habuz.

"O king," said the astrologer, "let not your city be disquieted, nor your warriors called to arms; we need no aid of force to deliver you from your enemies. Dismiss your attendants, and let us proceed alone to the secret hall of the tower."

The ancient Aben Habuz mounted the staircase of the tower, leaning on the arm of the still more ancient Ibrahim Ebn Abu Ayub. They unlocked the brazen door and entered. The window that looked towards the Pass of Lope was open. "In this direction," said the astrologer, "lies the danger; approach, O king, and behold the mystery of the table."

King Aben Habuz approached the seeming chess-board, on which were arranged the small wooden effigies, when, to his surprise, he perceived that they were all in motion. The horses pranced and curveted, the warriors brandished their weapons, and there was a faint sound of drums and trumpets, and the clang of arms, and neighing of steeds; but all no louder, nor more distinct, than the hum of the bee, or the summer-fly, in the drowsy ear of him who lies at noontide in the shade.

"Behold, O king," said the astrologer, "a proof that thy enemies are even now in the field. They must be advancing through yonder mountains, by the Pass of Lope. Would you produce a panic and confusion amongst them, and cause them to retreat without loss of life, strike these effigies with the butt end of this magic lance; would you cause bloody feud and carnage, strike with the point."

A livid streak passed across the countenance of Aben Habuz; he seized the lance with trembling eagerness, his gray beard wagged with exultation as he tottered toward the table: "Son of Abu Ayub," exclaimed he, in chuckling tone, "I think we will have a little blood!"

So saying, he thrust the magic lance into some of

the pigmy effigies, and belabored others with the butt end, upon which the former fell as dead upon the board, and the rest turning upon each other began, pell-mell, a chance-medley fight.

It was with difficulty the astrologer could stay the hand of the most pacific of monarchs, and prevent him from absolutely exterminating his foes, at length he prevailed upon him to leave the tower, and to send out scouts to the mountains by the Pass of Lope.

They returned with the intelligence, that a Christian army had advanced through the heart of the Sierra, almost within sight of Granada, where a dissension had broken out among them, they had turned their weapons against each other, and after much slaughter had retreated over the border.

Aben Aabuz was transported with joy on thus proving the efficacy of the talisman "At length," said he, "I shall lead a life of tranquillity, and have all my enemies in my power O wise son of Abu Ayub, what can I bestow on thee in reward for such a blessing?"

"The wants of an old man and a philosopher, O king, are few and simple; grant me but the means of fitting up my cave as a suitable hermitage, and I am content."

"How noble is the moderation of the truly wise!" exclaimed Aben Habuz, secretly pleased at the cheapness of the recompense. He summoned his treasurer, and bade him dispense whatever sums might be required by Ibrahim to complete and furnish his hermitage.

The astrologer now gave orders to have various chambers hewn out of the solid rock, so as to form ranges of apartments connected with his astrological hall; these he caused to be furnished with luxurious ottomans and divans, and the walls to be hung with the richest silks of Damascus. "I am an old man," said he, "and can no longer rest my bones on stone couches, and these damp walls require covering"

He had baths too constructed, and provided with all kinds of perfumes and aromatic oils: "For a bath," said he, "is necessary to counteract the rigidity of age, and to restore freshness and suppleness to the frame withered by study."

He caused the apartments to be hung with innumerable silver and crystal lamps, which he filled with a fragrant oil, prepared according to a receipt discovered by him in the tombs of Egypt. This oil was perpetual in its nature, and diffused a soft radiance like the tempered light of day. "The light of the

sun," said he, "is too garish and violent for the eyes of an old man, and the light of the lamp is more congenial to the studies of a philosopher"

The treasurer of king Aben Habuz groaned at the sums daily demanded to fit up this hermitage, and he carried his complaints to the king. The royal word, however, had been given; Aben Habuz shrugged his shoulders. "We must have patience," said he, "this old man has taken his idea of a philosophic retreat from the interior of the pyramids, and of the vast ruins of Egypt; but all things have an end, and so will the furnishing of his cavern"

The king was in the right, the hermitage was at length complete, and formed a sumptuous subterranean palace. The astrologer expressed himself perfectly content, and, shutting himself up, remained for three whole days buried in study. At the end of that time he appeared again before the treasurer "One thing more is necessary," said he, "one trifling solace for the intervals of mental labor."

"O wise Ibrahim, I am bound to furnish every thing necessary for thy solitude; what more dost thou require?"

"I would fain have a few dancing women."

"Dancing women!" echoed the treasurer, with surprise

"Dancing women," replied the sage, gravely; "and let them be young and fair to look upon; for the sight of youth and beauty is refreshing. A few will suffice, for I am a philosopher of simple habits and easily satisfied"

While the philosophic Ibrahim Ebn Abu Ayub passed his time thus sagely in his hermitage, the pacific Aben Habuz carried on furious campaigns in effigy in his tower. It was a glorious thing for an old man, like himself, of quiet habits, to have war made easy, and to be enabled to amuse himself in his chamber by brushing away whole armies like so many swarms of flies.

For a time he rioted in the indulgence of his humors, and even taunted and insulted his neighbors, to induce them to make incursions, but by degrees they grew wary from repeated disasters until no one ventured to invade his territories. For many months the bronze horseman remained on the peace establishment with his lance elevated in the air, and the worthy old monarch began to repine at the want of his accustomed sport, and to grow peevish at his monotonous tranquillity.

At length, one day, the talismanic horseman veered suddenly round, and lowering his lance, made a dead point towards the mountains of Guadix. Aben Habuz hastened to his tower, but the magic table in that direction remained quiet, not a single warrior was in motion. Perplexed at the circumstance, he sent forth a troop of horse to scour the mountains and reconnoitre. They returned after three days' absence.

"We have searched every mountain pass," said they, "but not a helm nor spear was stirring. All that we have found in the course of our foray, was a Christian damsel of surpassing beauty, sleeping at noon-tide beside a fountain, whom we have brought away captive."

"A damsel of surpassing beauty!" exclaimed Aben Habuz, his eyes gleaming with animation; "let her be conducted into my presence."

The beautiful damsel was accordingly conducted into his presence. She was arrayed with all the luxury of ornament that had prevailed among the Gothic Spaniards at the time of the Arabian conquest. Pearls of dazzling whiteness were entwined with her raven tresses; and jewels sparkled on her forehead, rivalling the lustre of her eyes. Around her neck was a golden chain, to which was suspended a silver lyre, which hung by her side.

The flashes of her dark refulgent eye were like sparks of fire on the withered, yet combustible, heart of Aben Habuz; the swimming voluptuousness of her gait made his senses reel. "Fairest of women," cried he, with rapture, "who and what art thou?"

"The daughter of one of the Gothic princes, who but lately ruled over this land. The armies of my father have been destroyed, as if by magic, among these mountains, he has been driven into exile, and his daughter is a captive."

"Beware, O king!" whispered Ibrahim Ebn Abu Ayub, "this may be one of these northern sorceresses of whom we have heard, who assume the most seductive forms to beguile the unwary. Methinks I read witchcraft in her eye, and sorcery in every movement. Doubtless this is the enemy pointed out by the talisman."

"Son of Abu Ayub," replied the king, "thou art a wise man, I grant, a conjuror for aught I know; but thou art little versed in the ways of woman. In that knowledge will I yield to no man; no, not to the wise Solomon himself, notwithstanding the number of his wives and concubines. As to this damsel, I see no

harm in her, she is fair to look upon, and finds favour in my eyes."

"Hearken, O king!" replied the astrologer. "I have given thee many victories by means of my talisman, but have never shared any of the spoil. Give me then this stray captive, to solace me in my solitude with her silver lyre. If she be indeed a sorceress, I have counter spells that set her charms at defiance."

"What! more women!" cried Aben Habuz. "Hast thou not already dancing women enough to solace thee?"

"Dancing women have I, it is true, but no singing women. I would fain have a little minstrelsy to refresh my mind when weary with the toils of study."

"A truce with thy hermit cravings," said the king, impatiently. "This damsel have I marked for my own. I see much comfort in her; even such comfort as David, the father of Solomon the wise, found in the society of Abishag the Shunamite."

Further solicitations and remonstrances of the astrologer only provoked a more peremptory reply from the monarch, and they parted in high displeasure. The sage shut himself up in his hermitage to brood over his disappointment, ere he departed, however, he gave the king one more warning to beware of his dangerous captive. But where is the old man in love that will listen to counsel? Aben Habuz resigned himself to the full sway of his passion. His only study was how to render himself amiable in the eyes of the Gothic beauty. He had not youth to recommend him, it is true, but then he had riches; and when a lover is old, he is generally generous. The Zacatin of Granada was ransacked for the most precious merchandise of the East, silks, jewels, precious gems, exquisite perfumes, all that Asia and Africa yielded of rich and rare, were lavished upon the princess. All kinds of spectacles and festivities were devised for her entertainment: minstrelsy, dancing, tournaments, bull-fights.—Granada for a time was a scene of perpetual pageant. The Gothic princess regarded all this splendor with the air of one accustomed to magnificence. She received every thing as a homage due to her rank, or rather to her beauty; for beauty is more lofty in its exactions even than rank. Nay, she seemed to take a secret pleasure in exciting the monarch to expenses that made his treasury shrink, and then treating his extravagant generosity as a mere matter of course. With all his assiduity and munificence, also, the venerable lover could not flatter himself that he had

made any impression on her heart. She never frowned on him, it is true, but then she never smiled. Whenever he began to plead his passion, she struck her silver lyre. There was a mystic charm in the sound. In an instant the monarch began to nod, a drowsiness stole over him, and he gradually sank into a sleep, from which he awoke wonderfully refreshed, but perfectly cooled for the time of his passion. This was very baffling to his suit, but then these slumbers were accompanied by agreeable dreams, which completely <sup>10</sup> enthralled the senses of the drowsy lover; so he continued to dream on, while all Granada scoffed at his infatuation, and groaned at the treasures lavished for a song.

At length a danger burst on the head of Aben Habuz, against which his talisman yielded him no warning. An insurrection broke out in his very capital, his palace was surrounded by an armed rabble, who menaced his life and the life of his Christian paramour. A spark of his ancient warlike spirit was <sup>20</sup> awakened in the breast of the monarch. At the head of a handful of his guards he sallied forth, put the rebels to flight, and crushed the insurrection in the bud.

When quiet was again restored, he sought the astrologer, who still remained shut up in his hermitage, chewing the bitter cud of resentment.

Aben Habuz approached him with a conciliatory tone. "O wise son of Abu Ayub," said he, "well didst thou predict dangers to me from this captive beauty. <sup>30</sup> Tell me then, thou who art so quick at foreseeing peril, what I should do to avert it."

"Put from thee the infidel damsel who is the cause."

"Sooner would I part with my kingdom," cried Aben Habuz.

"Thou art in danger of losing both," replied the astrologer.

"Be not harsh and angry, O most profound of philosophers; consider the double distress of a monarch and a lover, and devise some means of protecting me from the evils by which I am menaced. I care not for grandeur, I care not for power, I languish only for repose; would that I had some quiet retreat where I might take refuge from the world, and all its cares, and pomps, and troubles, and devote the remainder of my days to tranquillity and love."

The astrologer regarded him for a moment, from under his bushy eyebrows.

"And what wouldst thou give, if I could provide thee such a retreat?"

"Thou shouldst name thy own reward, and whatever it might be, if within the scope of my power, as my soul liveth, it should be thine."

"Thou hast heard, O king, of the garden of Irem, one of the prodigies of Arabia the happy."

"I have heard of that garden; it is recorded in the Koran, even in the chapter entitled 'The Dawn of Day.' I have, moreover, heard marvellous things related of it by pilgrims who had been to Mecca; but I considered them wild fables, such as travellers are wont to tell who have visited remote countries."

"Discredit not, O king, the tales of travellers," rejoined the astrologer, gravely, "for they contain precious rarities of knowledge brought from the ends of the earth. As to the palace and garden of Irem, what is generally told of them is true; I have seen them with mine own eyes—listen to my adventure; <sup>40</sup> for it has a bearing upon the object of your request."

"In my younger days, when a mere Arab of the desert, I tended my father's camels. In traversing the desert of Aden, one of them strayed from the rest, and was lost. I searched after it for several days, but in vain, until, wearied and faint, I laid myself down at noontide, and slept under a palm-tree by the side of a scanty well. When I awoke, I found myself at the gate of a city. I entered, and beheld noble streets, and squares, and market-places, but all were silent and without an inhabitant. I wandered on until I came to a sumptuous palace with a garden adorned with fountains and fishponds, and groves and flowers, and orchards laden with delicious fruit, but still no one was to be seen. Upon which, appalled at this loneliness, I hastened to depart; and, after issuing forth at the gate of the city, I turned to look upon the place, but it was no longer to be seen, nothing but the silent desert extended before my eyes."

"In the neighborhood I met with an aged dervise, learned in the traditions and secrets of the land, and related to him what had befallen me. 'This,' said he, 'is the far-famed garden of Irem, one of the wonders of the desert. It only appears at times to some wanderer like thyself, gladdening him with the sight of towers and palaces and garden walls overhung with richly-laden fruit-trees, and then vanishes, leaving nothing but a lonely desert. And this is the story of it. In old times, when this country was inhabited by the Addites, King Sheddad, the son of Ad, the great

grandson of Noah, founded here a splendid city. When it was finished, and he saw its grandeur, his heart was puffed up with pride and arrogance, and he determined to build a royal palace, with gardens which should rival all related in the Koran of the celestial paradise. But the curse of heaven fell upon him for his presumption. He and his subjects were swept from the earth, and his splendid city, and palace, and gardens, were laid under a perpetual spell, which hides them from human sight, excepting that 10 they are seen at intervals, by way of keeping his sin in perpetual remembrance.

"This story, O king, and the wonders I had seen, ever dwelt in my mind, and in after years, when I had been in Egypt, and was possessed of the book of knowledge of Solomon the wise, I determined to return and revisit the garden of Irem. I did so, and found it revealed to my instructed sight. I took possession of the palace of Sheddad, and passed several days in his mock paradise. The genii who watch over 20 the place, were obedient to my magic power, and revealed to me the spells by which the whole garden had been, as it were, conjured into existence, and by which it was rendered invisible. Such a palace and garden, O king, can I make for thee, even here, on the mountain above thy city. Do I not know all the secret spells? and am I not in possession of the book of knowledge of Solomon the wise?"

"O wise son of Abu Ayub!" exclaimed Aben Habuz, trembling with eagerness, "thou art a traveller indeed, 30 and hast seen and learned marvellous things! Contrive me such a paradise, and ask any reward, even to the half of my kingdom."

"Alas!" replied the other, "thou knowest I am an old man, and a philosopher, and easily satisfied; all the reward I ask is the first beast of burden, with its load, which shall enter the magic portal of the palace."

The monarch gladly agreed to so moderate a stipulation, and the astrologer began his work. On the 40 summit of the hill, immediately above his subterranean hermitage, he caused a great gateway or barbican to be erected, opening through the centre of a strong tower.

There was an outer vestibule or porch, with a lofty arch, and within it a portal secured by massive gates. On the key-stone of the portal the astrologer, with his own hand, wrought the figure of a huge key; and on the key-stone of the outer arch of the vesti-

bule, which was loftier than that of the portal, he carved a gigantic hand. These were potent talismans, over which he repeated many sentences in an unknown tongue.

When this gateway was finished he shut himself up for two days in his astrological hall, engaged in secret incantations; on the third he ascended the hill, and passed the whole day on its summit. At a late hour of the night he came down, and presented himself before Aben Habuz. "At length, O king," said he, "my labor is accomplished. On the summit of the hill stands one of the most delectable palaces that ever the head of man devised, or the heart of man desired. It contains sumptuous halls and galleries, delicious gardens, cool fountains, and fragrant baths; in a word the whole mountain is converted into a paradise. Like the garden of Irem, it is protected by a mighty charm, which hides it from the view and search of mortals, excepting such as possess the secret 10 of its talismans."

"Enough!" cried Aben Habuz, joyfully, "to-morrow morning with the first light we will ascend and take possession." The happy monarch slept but little that night. Scarcely had the rays of the sun begun to play about the snowy summit of the Sierra Nevada, when he mounted his steed, and, accompanied only by a few chosen attendants, ascended a steep and narrow road leading up the hill. Beside him, on a white palfrey, rode the Gothic princess, her whole dress sparkling with jewels, while round her neck was suspended her silver lyre. The astrologer walked on the other side of the king, assisting his steps with his hieroglyphic staff, for he never mounted steed of any kind.

Aben Habuz looked to see the towers of the palace brightening above him, and the imbowered terraces of its gardens stretching along the heights, but as yet nothing of the kind was to be descried. "That is the mystery and safeguard of the place," said the astrologer, "nothing can be discerned until you have passed the spell-bound gateway, and been put in possession of the place."

As they approached the gateway, the astrologer paused, and pointed out to the king the mystic hand and key carved upon the portal of the arch. "These," said he, "are the talismans which guard the entrance to this paradise. Until yonder hand shall reach down and seize that key, neither mortal power nor magic artifice can prevail against the lord of this mountain."

While Aben Habuz was gazing, with open mouth and silent wonder, at these mystic talismans, the palfrey of the princess proceeded, and bore her in at the portal, to the very centre of the barbican.

"Behold," cried the astrologer, "my promised reward, the first animal with its burden which should enter the magic gateway."

Aben Habuz smiled at what he considered a pleasantry of the ancient man, but when he found him to be in earnest, his gray beard trembled with indignation.

"Son of Abu Ayub," said he, sternly, "what equivocation is this? Thou knowest the meaning of my promise: the first beast of burden, with its load, that should enter this portal. Take the strongest mule in my stables, load it with the most precious things of my treasury, and it is thine, but dare not raise thy thoughts to her who is the delight of my heart."

"What need I of wealth," cried the astrologer, scornfully, "have I not the book of knowledge of Solomon the wise, and through it the command of the secret treasures of the earth? The princess is mine by right, thy royal word is pledged, I claim her as my own."

The princess looked down haughtily from her palfrey, and a light smile of scorn curled her rosy lip at this dispute between two gray-beards, for the possession of youth and beauty. The wrath of the monarch got the better of his discretion. "Base son of the desert," cried he, "thou may'st be master of many arts, but know me for thy master, and presume not to juggle with thy king."

"My master! my king!" echoed the astrologer—"The monarch of a mole-hill to claim sway over him who possesses the talismans of Solomon! Farewell, Aben Habuz, reign over thy petty kingdom, and revel in thy paradise of fools; for me, I will laugh at thee in my philosophic retirement."

So saying he seized the bridle of the palfrey, smote the earth with his staff, and sank with the Gothic princess through the centre of the barbican. The earth closed over them, and no trace remained of the opening by which they had descended.

Aben Habuz was struck dumb for a time with astonishment. Recovering himself, he ordered a thousand workmen to dig, with pickaxe and spade, into the ground where the astrologer had disappeared. They digged and digged, but in vain; the flinty bosom

of the hill resisted their implements; or if they did penetrate a little way, the earth filled in again as fast as they threw it out. Aben Habuz sought the mouth of the cavern at the foot of the hill, leading to the subterranean palace of the astrologer, but it was nowhere to be found. Where once had been an entrance, was now a solid surface of primeval rock. With the disappearance of Ibrahim Ebn Abu Ayub ceased the benefit of his talismans. The bronze horseman remained fixed, with his face turned toward the hill, and his spear pointed to the spot where the astrologer had descended, as if there still lurked the deadliest foe of Aben Habuz.

From time to time the sound of music, and the tones of a female voice, could be faintly heard from the bosom of the hill, and a peasant one day brought word to the king, that in the preceding night he had found a fissure in the rock, by which he had crept in, until he looked down into a subterranean hall, in which sat the astrologer, on a magnificent divan, slumbering and nodding to the silver lyre of the princess, which seemed to hold a magic sway over his senses.

Aben Habuz sought the fissure in the rock, but it was again closed. He renewed the attempt to unearth his rival, but all in vain. The spell of the hand and key was too potent to be counteracted by human power. As to the summit of the mountain, the site of the promised palace and garden, it remained a naked waste, either the boasted elysium was hidden from sight by enchantment, or was a mere fable of the astrologer. The world charitably supposed the latter, and some used to call the place "The King's Folly;" while others named it "The Fool's Paradise."

To add to the chagrin of Aben Habuz, the neighbors whom he had defied and taunted, and cut up at his leisure while master of the talismanic horseman, finding him no longer protected by magic spell, made inroads into his territories from all sides, and the remainder of the life of the most pacific of monarchs was a tissue of turmoils.

At length Aben Habuz died, and was buried. Ages have since rolled away. The Alhambra has been built on the eventful mountain, and in some measure realizes the fabled delights of the garden of Irem. The spell-bound gateway still exists entire, protected no doubt by the mystic hand and key, and now forms the Gate of Justice, the grand entrance to the fortress. Under that gateway, it is said, the old astrologer

remains in his subterranean hall, nodding on his divan, lulled by the silver lyre of the princess.

The old invalid sentinels who mount guard at the gate hear the strains occasionally in the summer nights; and, yielding to their soporific power, doze quietly at their posts. Nay, so drowsy an influence pervades the place, that even those who watch by day may generally be seen nodding on the stone benches of the barbican, or sleeping under the neighboring

trées, so that in fact it is the drowsiest military post in all Christendom. All this, say the ancient legends, will endure from age to age. The princess will remain captive to the astrologer; and the astrologer, bound up in magic slumber by the princess, until the last day, unless the mystic hand shall grasp the fated key, and dispel the whole charm of this enchanted mountain.

## NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE (1804-1864)

In spite of his detachment from the tumultuous America of his day, Hawthorne's immersion in the past of his country made him one of the most deeply-rooted of American writers and enabled him to record with singular clarity the subterranean history of American character. Sprung from a long line of Puritans who had lived in Salem without interruption since the founding of the colony, he dwelt with something like the old Puritanic introspection upon the race and place that had bred him. New Englander that he was, he shared fully in the New England provincialism, and until he was fifty never got farther away than Niagara Falls. New England, he said, was as large a lump of earth as his heart could readily take in. Few of his contemporaries studied more intently the pages of Puritan history; none knew more intimately that stern Puritan conscience or the hard Puritan character. He was, at various times, both attracted and repelled by Puritanism, but he never got wholly outside its influence.

A psychologist and a moralist, concerned with human problems and spiritual effects, he probed and analyzed the inner recesses of mind and conscience to illustrate the subtle relations between men and, quite as often, between man and his Maker, or between man and his own humanity. The characters, action, and setting of his stories exist primarily to give body to some allegory, to enforce some moral, or to illustrate some abstraction. The narrative, often satisfactory enough in itself, is never an end in itself, but rather the illustration that a preacher employs to elucidate or enforce his text. Yet his moral, however direct, is never the barefaced preachment; and Poe, who found writers less purposeful than Hawthorne guilty of the "heresy of the didactic," never specifically attacked Hawthorne on this head, though he criticized him for other real or fancied faults, while praising him for his pure style, fine taste, delicate humor, touching pathos, radiant imagination, and consummate ingenuity. What Poe missed in Hawthorne, probably because it did not accord with Poe's own idea of what a short story should be, is Hawthorne's greatest contribution to the genre as Irving had left it: that is, Hawthorne's investiture of the

story with an idea. Thus he gave the American short story carrying power and made of it something more than the mere vehicle of entertainment as Irving had conceived it.

Foremost in importance as explaining the uniquely somber, contemplative cast of Hawthorne was his Puritan descent. In the preface to *The Scarlet Letter* he recalled, with mingled feelings of pride and apprehension, the American founders of his race who were invested by family tradition with "a dim and dusky grandeur." First, there was the "grave, bearded, sable-cloaked and steeple-crowned" Major William Hathorne (the *w* was first added to the family name by Hawthorne himself during his college years), who, as "soldier, legislator, judge, and ruler in the church," had all the Puritanic traits, "both good and evil." Like the first, the second Hathorne stood high in the Puritanic hierarchy. He was Colonel and Judge John Hathorne, and like his father, a good persecutor of Quakers and other dissenters. Mindful of the Biblical text on the sins of the fathers being visited on successive generations of their children, Hawthorne's Puritanic conscience impelled him to write in 1850:

I know not whether these ancestors of mine bethought themselves to repent, and ask pardon of Heaven for their cruelties; or whether they are now groaning under the heavy consequences of them, in another state of being. At all events, I, the present writer, as their representative, hereby take shame upon myself for their sakes, and pray that any curse incurred by them—as I have heard, and as the dreary and unprosperous condition of the race for many a long year back would argue to exist—may be now and henceforth removed.

Closely associated with these family ties was the old town of Salem itself, that remarkable old Puritan hive, where he was born, and where he dwelt all but a few of the first forty years of his life. Years later he testified that though he had been invariably happier elsewhere, he still possessed "a feeling for old Salem," which for lack of a better phrase he had to call "affection." Salem, he said, drew him like a magnet, and remained for him "the inevitable center of the universe." There all the descendants of Major Hathorne had been born, and there they died, to mingle "their



earthly substance with the soil," until, as Hawthorne put it, in typically Hawthornesque terms, "no small portion of it must necessarily be akin to the mortal frame wherewith, for a little while, I walk the streets."

In part, therefore, the attachment which I speak of is the mere sensuous sympathy of dust for dust. Few of my countrymen can know what it is; nor, as frequent transplantation is perhaps better for the stock, need they consider it desirable to know.

This passage, together with the reference to the "dreary and unprosperous condition" of the Hathornes following the two earliest generations, introduces us to another family influence that preyed on Nathaniel Hawthorne's mind. The Hathornes had fallen through the centuries from the position of colonel, priest, and judge to that of sea captain. For many generations they had been sea-faring men, "a gray-headed ship-master, in each generation, retiring from the quarterdeck to the homestead, while a boy of fourteen took the hereditary place before the mast, confronting the salt spray and the gale, which had blustered against his sire and grandsire." Thus, while they still carried on in the vigorous tradition of activity, they had left behind them much of the glory, honor, wealth, and position of the earlier day. Closely associated with this loss of influence was the once large estate in Maine which had slipped through their fingers, until, by Hawthorne's time, only a few acres remained. Given as he was to brooding on family fortunes and the past, he could not but reflect on the grandeur that was gone, and, as might be expected, certain aspects of this loss of estate appear in his stories, notably in *The House of the Seven Gables*, while the attempts of one generation to secure for its progeny earthly wealth and position form a common motif in his short stories as well as in several of the four romances which he left incomplete at his death. It was a recurring and absorbing theme, of which, like so many others, he could make neither head nor tail. The older he grew, the more did he encounter problems of life that seemed unaccountable and irresolvable.

Hawthorne's generation did not suffer actual poverty, but when, in 1808, Mrs. Hathorne's husband died in Dutch Guiana, she was left with very little with which to rear her two daughters and one son, and an uncle had to lend his assistance to give Hawthorne a college education. But here again, Bowdoin College, then a struggling little freshwater college, was the best that was available to him, while the earlier Hathornes had enjoyed the best educational advantages of the land.

These circumstances doubtless encouraged what may have been an innate tendency in Hawthorne to ponder the somberness and transitory nature of life. His mother's retirement from the world upon her husband's death was another formative factor. She affected widow's weeds, dedicated the rest of her life to mourning, and spent weeks on end in her room. During his ninth year Hawthorne was struck on the ankle by a ball. This accident left him lame for several years, and robbed him of the opportunity of indulging in the rough-and-tumble of boyish play during these most impressionable years of a boy's life. The result was to accentuate his tendency toward retirement, introspection, and a generally sedentary life, which naturally sought an outlet in reading. And his reading, since it was done chiefly in allegorical literature like Spenser's *Faerie Queene* and Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, tended to develop still more this inwardness of temperament. During 1816-18 he spent portions of each year with his uncle Richard Manning, near Lake Sebago at Raymond, Maine, on what was left of the family estate, and during 1818 his mother, partly to live more cheaply, moved her family thither. Here Hawthorne spent a year entirely to his heart's content, running quite wild, hunting and fishing, but reading a good deal, too, especially during the rainy seasons and during the long winter. Years later he told his friend J. T. Fields, "There I lived . . . like a bird of the air, so perfect was the freedom I enjoyed. But it was there I first got my cursed habits of solitude."

In 1819 Mrs. Hathorne returned to Salem to put her children to school. Nathaniel would have preferred his father's calling, but Mrs. Hathorne, having taken an extreme aversion for the sea, insisted that he prepare himself for college. He spent the years from 1821 to 1825 at Bowdoin, where he submitted to the educational process only half-willingly, at all events, unenthusiastically, but he was hail-fellow-well-met among his classmates, and graduated about the middle of his class. Here he formed lasting friendships with Horatio Bridge, Franklin Pierce, and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.

Already before going to college, the choice of a calling had troubled him, and writing to his mother he admitted that while he was "quite reconciled to going to college," he still considered that "four years of the best part of my life is a great deal to throw away." Knowing very well that his uncles wished him to choose one of the regular professions as the more promising and remunerative, he already found reasons why none of them was altogether acceptable, and ended the letter on this note. "Oh that I was rich enough to live without a profession! What do you

think of my becoming an author, and relying for support upon my pen? Indeed, I think the illegibility of my handwriting is very author-like." Four years later, when he was about to graduate, without having prepared himself for anything in particular, he again wrote:

I do not want to be a doctor and live by man's diseases, nor a minister and live by their sins, nor a lawyer and live by their quarrels. So I don't see that there is anything left but for me to be an author. How would you like to see some day a whole shelf full of books written by your son, with "Hawthorne's Works" printed on the backs?

Thus it was that he returned to Salem ill prepared to add much to the family income. Whatever hopes he had about the money to be made by his writing must have been considerably dashed by the failure of his first novel, entitled *Fanshawe* (1828), which he recognized as a failure the moment it appeared in print, and which accordingly he did his best to withdraw from circulation by buying up all copies that he could find. Nevertheless, he persevered, and during the twelve years that he spent in his "solitary chamber under the eaves," he used up reams upon reams of paper, burning, rewriting, and polishing away at his style. All this was without the least recognition or applause. It was a self-imposed period of rigorous literary discipline during which Hawthorne the writer was born, but during which Hawthorne the man suffered irreparable harm from the virus of solitude, isolation, enervation, and distrust of his own abilities. The lack of wholesome human contacts wore on him. The household to which he had returned in 1825 was drearier than ever, the mother's way of living having been adopted by his sisters also, so that, as he observed, "We do not even live at our house!" He seldom left the house except to go on a solitary ramble in the woods, and during the summer, to enjoy a daily swim early in the morning, before anyone else was astir. Consequently he could write in 1837 that though he had lived in Salem almost all his life, there were not a score of people in the town who so much as suspected his existence. During the twelve years between his graduation from college and the publication of *Twice-Told Tales* in 1837 (arranged for by his friend Bridge), he published twenty-five of his tales and sketches in various periodicals, mainly in *The Token*, an annual edited by S. C. Goodrich; but these were published anonymously. They brought him no fame and almost no financial reward.

The modest title of *Twice-Told Tales*, while appropriate to the tone of the stories, was really a misnomer, for as far as the public was concerned they were entirely new. But their appearance in collected

form over his name in 1837 was an event of no small importance to the life of Hawthorne the writer as well as of Hawthorne the man. The book elicited several appreciative reviews, including a very favorable one by Longfellow in the *North American Review*, and Hawthorne himself admitted, "I was compelled to come out of my owl's nest and lionize in a small way." But, as he went on to admit to Longfellow, he had by now so long secluded himself from society, or rather permitted himself to be carried so far apart from the main current of life, that he found it impossible to get back again.

I have secluded myself from society, and yet I never meant any such thing, nor dreamed what sort of life I was going to lead. I have made a captive of myself, and put me in a dungeon, and now I cannot find the key to let myself out,—and if the door were open, I should be almost afraid to come out. You tell me that you have met with troubles and changes. I know not what these may have been, but I can assure you that trouble is the next best thing to enjoyment, and that there is no fate in this world so horrible as to have no share in either its joys or sorrows. For the past ten years, I have not lived, but only dreamed of living. . . . As to my literary efforts, I do not think much of them. They would have been better, I trust, if written under more favorable circumstances. . . . There has been no warmth of approbation, so that I have written with benumbed fingers. I have another great difficulty in the lack of materials, for I have seen so little of the world that I have nothing but thin air to concoct my stories of, and it is not easy to give a lifelike substance to such shadowy stuff. Sometimes through a peep-hole I have caught a glimpse of the real world, and the two or three articles in which I have portrayed these glimpses please me better than the others.

Hawthorne's latest biographers minimize his hermit-like, retiring existence, emphasizing instead his extrovert, gregarious nature. The truth doubtless lies somewhere between these two views. Both as boy and man, he often showed mental independence and physical vigor. All his life he enjoyed good conversation and convivial companionship, while his talk was characterized by a variety and raciness of speech that does not harmonize with the picture of Hawthorne as a secluded, delicate aesthete, lacking all contact with life. But however much he expanded the scope of his experience after he left Salem, in his writings he seldom got very far outside himself or outside the manner which had become instinctive. The somber tone had become too definitely fastened on his mind to be dispelled. While attempting to write *The Dolliver Romance* he said, "I wish God had given me the faculty of writing a sunshiny book"; and while he was preparing a new edi-

tion of the *Mosses from an Old Manse* in 1854, during the busy period of his consulate in Liverpool, he confessed to his publisher, "I am not quite sure that I entirely comprehend my own meanings, in some of these blasted allegories, but I remember that [when I wrote them] I always had a meaning, or at least thought I had." Four years later, he wrote to Fields, "My own individual taste is for quite another class of works than those which I myself am able to write. If I were to meet with such books as mine, by another writer, I don't believe I should be able to get through them." Shortly after completing *The Marble Faun* (1860), he said, "I will try to write a more genial book; but the Devil himself always seems to get into my inkstand, and I can only exorcise him by pensful at a time." No sunshiny book was to come from his pen; the last four separate attempts that he made at writing a more cheerful romance all turned out to be abortive.

The preface to the *Twice-Told Tales* contains a remarkably accurate piece of self-criticism, indicative of the fact that Hawthorne early learned what he was about stylistically. The stones, he says, have

. . . the pale tint of flowers that blossomed in too retired a shade,—the coolness of a meditative habit, which diffuses itself through the feeling and observation of every sketch. Instead of passion there is sentiment, and, even in what purport to be pictures of actual life, we have allegory, not always so warmly dressed in its habiliments of flesh and blood as to be taken into the reader's mind without a shiver. Whether from lack of power, or an unconquerable reserve, the Author's touches have often an effect of tameness, the merriest man can hardly contrive to laugh at his broadest humor, the tenderest woman, one would suppose, will hardly shed warm tears at his deepest pathos. The book, if you would see anything in it, requires to be read in the clear, brown, twilight atmosphere in which it was written; if opened in the sunshine, it is apt to look exceedingly like a volume of blank pages.

The stories, except for several descriptive sketches, are either searching psychological analyses or illustrations of some abstract or philosophical question of the type that he jotted down in his notebooks for literary elaboration. "A hint for a story,—some incident which should bring on a general war; and the chief character in the incident to have something corresponding to the mischief he had caused." "A well-concerted train of incidents to be thrown into confusion by some misplaced circumstance, unsuspected till the catastrophe, yet exerting its influence from beginning to end." "Cannon transformed into church-bells." "To make one's own reflection in a mirror the subject of a story." "Every individual has

a place to fill in the world, and is important, in some respects, whether he chooses to be so or not." "A snake taken into a man's stomach and nourished there from fifteen to thirty-five, tormenting him most horribly. A type of envy or some other evil passion." "A lament for life's wasted sunshine." "What were the contents of the burden of Christian in the 'Pilgrim's Progress'?" "Trifles to one are matters of life and death to another." "A person to be in possession of something as perfect as mortal man has a right to demand, he tries to make it better and ruins it entirely." "To make a story out of a scarecrow, giving it odd attributes." "Curious to imagine what murmurings and discontent would be excited, if any of the great so-called calamities of human beings were to be abolished,—as, for instance, death."

Following the success of *Twice-Told Tales*, Hawthorne made renewed efforts to break through the walls of his self-imposed prison. Through the instrumentality of Elizabeth Palmer Peabody, an enthusiastic Transcendentalist, who kept an up-to-date bookshop in Boston, he saw something of literary society and came to know the other Peabody girls, who lived in Salem. Mary Peabody was to become the wife of Horace Mann, the educator, and Sophia, an artistically inclined invalid, eventually became Hawthorne's wife. They became engaged in 1838, but the marriage was deferred, at first, presumably because Hawthorne lacked the means and possibly also because of Sophia's ill health. But even after her health improved, Hawthorne still held off. Something is doubtless attributable to the timidity and hesitation of a bachelor who has lived too much to himself. For even after Elizabeth Palmer Peabody had helped him to the post of weigher and gauger at the Boston Custom House, where, during 1839-41, he saved a thousand dollars, instead of marrying Sophia, he took the extraordinary step of investing all his savings in the Brook Farm Association for Agriculture and Education near Roxbury, Massachusetts, a Transcendentalist experiment in communal living designed to combine ideal proportions of physical, intellectual, and artistic endeavor. Considering his inherent distrust of reformers and his lack of enthusiasm for Transcendentalism, no good reason remains but that he hoped to find in Brook Farm a place where he might cultivate his starved sense of sociability, and since he bought two shares of stock, it seems likely that, if he found life congenial at Brook Farm, he planned to bring his bride there.

The *Notebooks*, kept during the six months of 1841 while he lived there, and *The Blithedale Romance*, written a decade later and based on his

experiences in the Roxbury community, record his growing disillusionment with the program of Brook Farm and his disaffection for some of its inmates and visitors. He experienced trouble retrieving his \$1,000 investment in the enterprise, but his good fortune in securing rent-free the Old Manse in Concord doubtless facilitated matters, and in July of 1842 he finally terminated his four-year engagement to Sophia Peabody by marriage.

They were poor but altogether happy in Concord. In the preface to *Mosses from an Old Manse* (1846) Hawthorne wrote an appreciative sketch of the old house that had never been profaned, as he said, by a lay occupant until the memorable summer when he entered it as his home.

A priest had built it, a priest had succeeded to it, other priestly men from time to time had dwelt in it, and children born in its chambers had grown up to assume the priestly character. It was awful to reflect how many sermons must have been written there. There was in the rear of the house the most delightful little nook of a study that ever offered its snug seclusion to a scholar. It was here that Emerson wrote *Nature*, for he was then an inhabitant of the Manse. When I first saw the room its walls were blackened with the smoke of unnumbered years, and made still blacker by the grim prints of Puritan ministers that hung around. These worthies looked strangely like bad angels, or at least like men who had wrestled so sternly with the devil that somewhat of his sooty fierceness had been imparted to their visages.

Here he was free to dream and to write. Here his first child was born—a daughter, whom he named Una in memory of the heroine of the first book of the *Faerie Queene*. Here he got, for the first time in his life, some experience in the intimacy of human contacts, both within his own family and among his neighbors. For Concord during the forties had more to offer than a river, surrounding woods, a lake, and Sleepy Hollow cemetery. There was Emerson, with whose optimistic Transcendentalism he was never fully in accord. “Mr. Emerson,” he wrote in his journal for 1842, “is a great searcher for facts, but they seem to melt away and become insubstantial in his grasp.” He admired Emerson as a poet of “deep beauty and austere tenderness,” but added that he “sought nothing from him as a philosopher.” Emerson, for his part, was attracted to Hawthorne as a person but complained that his books were “not good for any thing.” The two men were diametrically opposed to each other in fundamental point of view. Emerson, the mystic sage, whose optimism led him practically to deny the existence of evil, found little to admire in Hawthorne’s books, preoccupied as they were with

the subject of human iniquities. And Hawthorne, who could not rid himself of his Puritanic prepossessions, wrote “The Celestial Railroad” to satirize the free and easy way to Heaven charted by the Transcendentalists. He preferred the “narrow but earnest cushion-thumper of puritanical times” to the “vaguely liberal clergyman.” He wrote “Earth’s Holocaust” to show that original sin was not a delusion, whereas Emerson, pushing his faith in natural goodness and self-reliance to the extreme, wrote, “If I am the Devil’s child, I will live then from the Devil. No law can be sacred to me but that of my nature.” Hawthorne’s stories, almost as if they had been designed to refute this doctrine, repeatedly present characters who do just that: Ethan Brand, Rappaccini, Chillingworth, Judge Pyncheon, and dozens of others live selfishly—after themselves, and the Devil—until they become diabolical incarnations and end disastrously.

Hawthorne had passed, with the last generation or two of his family, from Calvinism to Unitarianism, but he did not go on to take the next step—to Transcendentalism. He recoiled, rather, back toward Puritanism. He had little respect for clergymen, theological writings, or the visible church. Indeed, his son Julian could not remember ever having seen his father in church. Yet he was by nature religious-minded—insisting, however, like the Unitarians, on his right as an individual to make his own creed. And in the formulation of that creed, he was impelled at numerous points to revert to the Puritanic doctrine in particulars. Unlike the Calvinists, he disclaimed any belief in a system of rewards and punishments as conventionally conceived, and he refused to regard Heaven and Hell as places of eternal bliss or damnation. Instead, he held that on the Judgment Day “man’s only inexorable judge will be himself, and the punishment of his sins . . . the perception of them.” His Day of Doom was not Michael Wigglesworth’s, but simply “all future days, when we shall see ourselves as we are.” Nevertheless, whether he gave them the conviction of his head or not, he continued using the old terms to designate the old religious quantities, such as Original Sin, Predestination, Atonement, and Redemption, lending them the sympathy of his imagination if not of his heart. If it came to choosing between Emerson and Bunyan, he preferred to take his stand with Bunyan.

Another Concord neighbor, that “awful Thoreau,” as some people called him, provided Hawthorne with interesting, if not altogether satisfactory, contacts. While admiring Thoreau’s skill as a boatman and as a naturalist, recognizing his “good sense and moral

truth," and envying his sturdy independence and freedom from conventional restraints, there was something about Henry Thoreau that made him a little "terrific." He put him down as "a healthy and wholesome man to know," but he considered it a limitation in Thoreau that he "despised the world and all that it had to offer," and that he made one feel "ashamed in his presence of having any money, or a home to live in, or so much as two coats to wear, or of having written a book that the public will read."

There were other interesting, if odd, personalities in Concord. William Ellery Channing the younger, W. H. Channing, the volatile Alcott, the ethereal Jones Very, and visitors from Boston and from Brook Farm, some of whom Hawthorne felt he knew better than he cared to. From Margaret Fuller he continued to shy away. He could not bring himself to like her, and considered her typical of "the damned mob of scribbling women"—females who, like his sister-in-law, Elizabeth Palmer Peabody, were too much concerned with reform and masculine pursuits to suit his fancy. Although he did not enjoy equally all his Concord associates, they provided him in large measure with precisely those human contacts, agreeable and disagreeable, which he had missed during his earlier years, and they doubtless did much toward humanizing and maturing the man who was to publish between 1846 and 1852 eight separate volumes.

The first of these, *Mosses from an Old Manse*, appeared in 1846, the year he went back to his birthplace as surveyor of the Salem Custom House. During the three years that he served there he found it impossible to do any writing, so that his falling victim to the spoils system in 1849 was doubtless a good thing so far as his literary productivity goes. He set to writing with a fury. The story of how he was inspired by old records found in the Salem Custom House to write *The Scarlet Letter* (1850) is well known. The subject had long interested him, and the new manuscript materials supplied what was lacking to set his imagination going. Turning upon the deep-seated conflicts between impulse and conscience, between individual desire and the restraints of society, this old story of how sin affects the lives and characters of the chief participants in a triangular love affair enacted in the Salem of old Puritanical days ideally suited his fancy and inspired his best talents.

Before he published his next novel, Hawthorne was thrown much in the company of Herman Melville, during 1850 and 1851, while they found themselves neighbors near Lenox, Massachusetts. Given, as both

of them were, to taking an intellectually skeptical view of the doctrines of human progress rampant at the time, they each drew support from the other. This congenial association between two kindred spirits was especially salutary to Melville, whose *Moby Dick* was then being "broiled in the hell-fire of his brain." After his fruitless wanderings through the deserts of theological and philosophical speculation, Melville found it heartening to discuss his problems with Hawthorne, in whom he recognized one of those "thought-divers" who "compel a man to swim for his life." In Hawthorne he saw that same "deep, dark blackness" pervading him "through and through" that gnawed at his own vitals, and together they sat, often far into the night, talking "about time and eternity, things of this world and of the next, and books, and publishers, and all possible and impossible matters."

Hawthorne's next book, *The House of the Seven Gables*, appeared in 1851. More pictorial than *The Scarlet Letter*, it develops with the same restrained psychological intensity its moral—in this instance, the thesis "that the wrong-doing of one generation lives into the successive ones, and, divesting itself of every temporary advantage, becomes a pure and uncontrollable mischief." Following *A Wonder Book for Boys and Girls* (1851), he published in 1852 *The Snow Image, The Blithedale Romance*, a thinly veiled antireform novel, and a campaign biography of Franklin Pierce. *Tanglewood Tales*, another book for children, followed the next year, and before the year was out his old college-mate Pierce, now the fourteenth President of the United States, appointed him consul to Liverpool.

He resigned the consulship in 1856, but continued resident in England for a year longer, while traveling about a good deal and planning other novels, like *The Ancestral Footstep*, which was destined to remain incomplete. In 1857 he went to Italy, living first in Florence, and later in Rome, where he began *The Marble Faun*, subsequently completed in London and published in 1860, the year of his return to Concord. His European trip came too late to change him or to do him much good. *Our Old Home* appeared in 1863, but his best work was done. Like so many characters in his books, Hawthorne himself, too often, failed to find any proper endings or conclusions to life's problems. During his last years he was torn more than ever by the discords and conflicts that he saw all around him—not the least of which were the horrors of the Civil War. Not knowing in the least what the proper solution of such a catastrophe should, or would, be, he was inclined to be-

lieve that abolition, like every other species of organized or forced reform, was poorly adapted to serve the best ends. He was inclined to look upon slavery as "one of those evils which divine Providence does not leave to be remedied by human contrivances, but which, in its own good time, by some means impossible to be anticipated, but of the simplest and easiest operation, *when all its uses shall have been fulfilled*, it causes to vanish like a dream." His skepticism of human reason, progress, and perfectibility led him to the pessimistic conclusion: "There is no instance, in all history, of the human will and intellect having perfected any great moral reform by methods which it adopted to that end . . . No human effort, on a grand scale, has ever resulted

according to the purpose of its projectors. The advantages are always incidental. Man's accidents are God's purposes." "An abolitionist in feeling" rather than "in principle," he considered the war a horrible mistake, but knew not in the least how to avert it or how to settle its issues in any less costly way. Life, in the end, grew increasingly enigmatical and burdensome for him, and toward the last he felt that he had written himself out, and that, like Melville, he was going to pieces inwardly. His four last attempts to write another romance proved abortive, and Emerson, standing at the grave of his neighbor on May 23, 1864, and hearing the clods of earth falling on the coffin, felt that Hawthorne's untimely death was in the nature of a happy release.

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FROM

*American Note-Books*<sup>1</sup>

August 31st [1835]— . . . A hint of a story,—some incident which should bring on a general war; and the chief actor in the incident to have something corresponding to the mischief he had caused.

September 7th — . . . A sketch to be given of a modern reformer,—a type of the extreme doctrines on the subject of slaves, cold water, and other such topics. He goes about the streets haranguing most eloquently, and is on the point of making many converts, when his labors are suddenly interrupted by the appearance of the keeper of a mad-house, whence he has escaped. Much may be made of this idea<sup>2</sup>

A change from a gay young girl to an old woman, the melancholy events, the effects of which have clustered around her character, and gradually imbued it with their influence, till she becomes a lover of sick-chambers, taking pleasure in receiving dying breaths and in laying out the dead, also having her mind full of funeral reminiscences, and possessing more acquaintances beneath the burial turf than above it<sup>3</sup>

A well-concerted train of events to be thrown into confusion by some misplaced circumstance, unsuspected till the catastrophe, yet exerting its influence from beginning to end.

On the common, at dusk, after a salute from two field-pieces, the smoke lay long and heavily on the ground, without much spreading beyond the original space over which it had gushed from the guns. It was about the height of a man. The evening clear, but with an autumnal chill.

The world is so sad and solemn, that things meant in jest are liable, by an overpowering influence, to become dreadful earnest,—gayly dressed fantasies turning to ghostly and black-clad images of themselves

<sup>1</sup> Called *American Note-Books* to distinguish these portions of Hawthorne's journal from his English, Italian and French notebooks. Originally published in 1868 by Mrs. Hawthorne, who severely edited, toned down, or deleted altogether many of Hawthorne's more colorful passages, this version should be compared with Randall Stewart's edition, transcribed from the original manuscript in the Pierpont Morgan Library, published in New Haven, 1932.

<sup>2</sup> Indicative of Hawthorne's distrust and dislike of "soft-headed but hard-handed" reformers who insist upon leading the

A story, the hero of which is to be represented as naturally capable of deep and strong passion, and looking forward to the time when he shall feel passionate love, which is to be the great event of his existence. But it so chances that he never falls in love, and although he gives up the expectation of so doing, and marries calmly, yet it is somewhat sadly, with sentiments merely of esteem for his bride. The lady might be one who had loved him early in life, but whom then, in his expectation of passionate love, he had scorned.

The scene of a story or sketch to be laid within the light of a street-lantern, the time, when the lamp is near going out, and the catastrophe to be simultaneous with the last flickering gleam.

The peculiar weariness and depression of spirits which is felt after a day wasted in turning over a magazine or other light miscellany, different from the state of mind after severe study; because there has been no excitement, no difficulties to be overcome, but the spirits have evaporated insensibly.

To represent the process by which sober truth gradually strips off all the beautiful draperies with which imagination has enveloped a beloved object, till from an angel she turns out to be a merely ordinary woman. This to be done without caricature, perhaps with a quiet humor interlarded, but the prevailing impression to be a sad one. The story might consist of the various alterations in the feelings of the absent lover, caused by successive events that display the true character of his mistress; and the catastrophe should take place at their meeting, when he finds himself equally disappointed in her person; or the whole spirit of the thing may here be reproduced<sup>4</sup>

Last evening, from the opposite shore of the North River, a view of the town mirrored in the water, which was as smooth as glass, with no perceptible

world to the instant millennium according to their particular plan or prescription. Hollingsworth, in *The Blithedale Romance* (1852), is Hawthorne's best caricature of such a monomaniac.

<sup>3</sup> Compare "Edward Fane's Rosebud" in *Twice-Told Tales*, 1837.

<sup>4</sup> Compare "Mrs. Bullfrog" in *Mosses from an Old Manse*, 1846.

tide or agitation, except a trifling swell and reflux on the sand, although the shadow of the moon danced in it. The picture of the town perfect in the water,—towers of churches, houses, with here and there a light gleaming near the shore above, and more faintly glimmering under water,—all perfect, but somewhat more hazy and indistinct than the reality. There were many clouds flitting about the sky; and the picture of each could be traced in the water,—the ghost of what was itself unsubstantial. The rattling of wheels heard long and far through the town. Voices of people talking on the other side of the river, the tones being so distinguishable in all their variations that it seemed as if what was there said might be understood; but it was not so.

Two persons might be bitter enemies through life, and mutually cause the ruin of one another, and of all that were dear to them. Finally, meeting at the funeral of a grandchild, the offspring of a son and daughter married without their consent,—and who, as well as the child, had been victims of their hatred,—they might discover that the supposed ground of the quarrel was altogether a mistake, and then be wofully reconciled.

Two persons, by mutual agreement, to make their wills in each other's favor, then to wait impatiently for one another's death, and both to be informed of the desired event at the same time. Both, in most joyous sorrow, hasten to be present at the funeral, meet, and find themselves both hoaxed.

The story of a man, cold and hard-hearted, and acknowledging no brotherhood with mankind. At his death they might try to dig him a grave, but, at a little space beneath the ground, strike upon a rock, as if the earth refused to receive the unnatural son into her bosom. Then they would put him into an old sepulchre, where the coffins and corpses were all turned to dust, and so he would be alone. Then the body would petrify; and he having died in some characteristic act and expression, he would seem, through endless ages of death, to repel society as in life, and no one would be buried in that tomb forever.<sup>5</sup>

Cannon transformed to church-bells.

<sup>5</sup> Compare "The Man of Adamant" in *The Snow Image and Other Tales*, 1852.

A person, even before middle age, may become musty and faded among the people with whom he has grown up from childhood; but, by migrating to a new place, he appears fresh with the effect of youth, which may be communicated from the impressions of others to his own feelings.

In an old house, a mysterious knocking might be heard on the wall, where had formerly been a doorway, now bricked up.

It might be stated, as the closing circumstance of a tale, that the body of one of the characters had been petrified, and still existed in that state.<sup>6</sup>

A young man to win the love of a girl, without any serious intentions, and to find that in that love, which might have been the greatest blessing of his life, he had conjured up a spirit of mischief which pursued him throughout his whole career,—and this without any revengeful purposes on the part of the deserted girl.

Two lovers, or other persons, on the most private business, to appoint a meeting in what they supposed to be a place of the utmost solitude, and to find it thronged with people.

*October 17th.*—Some of the oaks are now a deep brown red, others are changed to a light green, which, at a little distance, especially in the sunshine, looks like the green of early spring. In some trees, different masses of the foliage show each of these hues. Some of the walnut-trees have a yet more delicate green. Others are of a bright sunny yellow.

Mr. — was married to Miss — last Wednesday. Yesterday Mr. Brazer, preaching on the comet, observed that not one, probably, of all who heard him, would witness its reappearance. Mrs. — shed tears. Poor soul! she would be contented to dwell in earthly love to all eternity!

Some treasure or other things to be buried, and a tree planted directly over the spot, so as to embrace it with its roots.

A tree, tall and venerable, to be said by tradition to have been the staff of some famous man, who happened to thrust it into the ground, where it took root.

<sup>6</sup> The motif is used in "The Man of Adamant."



A fellow without money, having a hundred and seventy miles to go, fastened a chain and padlock to his legs, and lay down to sleep in a field. He was apprehended and carried gratis to a jail in the town whither he desired to go

An old volume in a large library,—every one to be afraid to unclasp and open it, because it was said to be a book of magic

A ghost seen by moonlight, when the moon was out, it would shine and melt through the airy substance of the ghost, as through a cloud

Prideaux, Bishop of Worcester, during the sway of the Parliament, was forced to support himself and his family by selling his household goods. A friend asked him, "How doth your lordship?" "Never better in my life," said the Bishop, "only I have too great a stomach, for I have eaten that little plate which the sequestrators left me I have eaten a great library of excellent books I have eaten a great deal of linen, much of my brass, some of my pewter, and now I am come to eat iron, and what will come next I know not."

A scold and a blockhead,—brimstone and wood,—a good match

To make one's own reflection in a mirror the subject of a story.<sup>7</sup>

In a dream to wander to some place where may be heard the complaints of all the miserable on earth.

Some common quality or circumstance that should bring together people the most unlike in all respects, and make a brotherhood and sisterhood of them,—the rich and the proud finding themselves in the same category with the mean and the despised.<sup>8</sup>

A person to consider himself as the prime mover of certain remarkable events, but to discover that his actions have not contributed in the least thereto. Another person to be the cause, without suspecting it.

October 25th.—A person or family long desires some particular good. At last it comes in such profusion as to be the great pest of their lives . . .

To have one event operate in several places,—as, for example, if a man's head were to be cut off in

one town, men's heads to drop off in several towns.

Follow out the fantasy of a man taking his life by instalments, instead of at one payment,—say ten years of life alternately with ten years of suspended animation. . . .

It is a singular thing, that, at the distance, say, of five feet, the work of the greatest dunce looks just as well as that of the greatest genius,—that little space being all the distance between genius and stupidity . . .

Four precepts: To break off customs, to shake off spirits ill-disposed, to meditate on youth, to do nothing against one's genius. . . .

September [1836] — . . . To picture the predicament of worldly people, if admitted to paradise. . . .

October 25 — . . . In this dismal chamber FAME was won. (Salem, Union Street)<sup>9</sup>

Those who are very difficult in choosing wives seem as if they would take none of Nature's ready-made works, but want a woman manufactured particularly to their order.

A council of the passengers in a street: called by somebody to decide upon some points important to him.

Every individual has a place to fill in the world, and is important, in some respects, whether he chooses to be so or not.

A Thanksgiving dinner All the miserable on earth are to be invited,—as the drunkard, the bereaved parent, the ruined merchant, the broken-hearted lover, the poor widow, the old man and woman who have outlived their generation, the disappointed author, the wounded, sick, and broken soldier, the diseased person, the infidel, the man with an evil conscience, little orphan children or children of neglectful parents, shall be admitted to the table, and many others. The giver of the feast goes out to deliver his invitations. Some of the guests he meets in the streets, some he knocks for at the doors of their

<sup>9</sup> It is to be observed that this notation was written shortly before *Twice-Told Tales* was published early the next year. The "dismal chamber" referred to was in reality in the house fronting Herbert, not Union, Street, but it backed up to his birthplace on Union Street

<sup>7</sup> See "Monsieur du Miroir" in *Mosses* (1846).

<sup>8</sup> Compare "The Procession of Life" in *Mosses*.

houses The description must be rapid But who must be the giver of the feast, and what his claims to preside? A man who has never found out what he is fit for, who has unsettled aims or objects in life, and whose mind gnaws him, making him the sufferer of many kinds of misery He should meet some pious, old, sorrowful person, with more outward calamities than any other, and invite him, with a reflection that piety would make all that miserable company truly thankful <sup>10</sup>

*Merry*, in "merry England," does not mean mirthful, but is corrupted from an old Teutonic word signifying famous or renowned.

In an old London newspaper, 1678, there is an advertisement, among the other goods at auction, of a black girl, about fifteen years old, to be sold

We sometimes congratulate ourselves at the moment of waking from a troubled dream it may be so the moment after death.

The race of mankind to be swept away, leaving all their cities and works. Then another human pair to be placed in the world, with native intelligence like Adam and Eve, but knowing nothing of their predecessors or of their own nature and destiny. They, perhaps, to be described as working out this knowledge by their sympathy with what they saw, and by their own feelings.<sup>11</sup>

Memorials of the family of Hawthorne in the church of the village of Dundry, Somersetshire, England The church is ancient and small, and has a prodigiously high tower of more modern date, being erected in the time of Edward IV. It serves as a landmark for an amazing extent of country.

A singular fact, that, when man is a brute, he is the most sensual and loathsome of all brutes.

A snake taken into a man's stomach and nourished there from fifteen years to thirty-five, tormenting him most horribly. A type of envy or some other evil passion.<sup>12</sup>

A sketch illustrating the imperfect compensations which time makes for its devastations on the person, —giving a wreath of laurel while it causes baldness,

honors for infirmities, wealth for a broken constitution,—and at last, when a man has everything that seems desirable, death seizes him. To contrast the man who has thus reached the summit of ambition with the ambitious youth.

Walking along the track of the railroad, I observed a place where the workmen had bored a hole through the solid rock, in order to blast it; but, striking a spring of water beneath the rock, it gushed up through the hole It looked as if the water were contained within the rock.

A Fancy Ball, in which the prominent American writers should appear, dressed in character.

A lament for life's wasted sunshine

A new classification of society to be instituted Instead of rich and poor, high and low, they are to be classed,—First, by their sorrows for instance, whenever there are any, whether in fair mansion or hovel, who are mourning the loss of relations and friends, and who wear black, whether the cloth be coarse or superfine, they are to make one class Secondly, all who have the same maladies, whether they lie under damask canopies or on straw pallets or in the wards of hospitals, they are to form one class Thirdly, all who are guilty of the same sins, whether the world knows them or not, whether they languish in prison, looking forward to the gallows, or walk honored among men, they also form a class Then proceed to generalize and classify the whole world together, as none can claim utter exemption from either sorrow, sin, or disease; and if they could, yet Death, like a great parent, comes and sweeps them all through one darksome portal,—all his children <sup>13</sup>

Fortune to come like a pedlar with his goods,—as wreaths of laurel, diamonds, crowns, selling them, but asking for them the sacrifice of health, of integrity, perhaps of life in the battle-field, and of the real pleasures of existence. Who would buy, if the puce were to be paid down?

The dying exclamation of the Emperor Augustus, "Has it not been well acted?" An essay on the misery of being always under a mask. A veil may be needful, but never a mask.<sup>14</sup> Instances of people who wear masks in all classes of society, and never take them

<sup>10</sup> See "The Christmas Banquet" in *Mosses*

<sup>11</sup> Turned to use in "The New Adam and Eve" in *Mosses*.

<sup>12</sup> See "Egotism; or, the Bosom Serpent" in *Mosses*.

<sup>13</sup> Utilized in "The Procession of Life" in *Mosses*.

<sup>14</sup> See "The Minister's Black Veil" in *Mosses*.

off even in the most familiar moments, though sometimes they may chance to slip aside.

The various guises under which Ruin makes his approaches to his victims. to the merchant, in the guise of a merchant offering speculations, to the young heir, a jolly companion, to the maiden, a sighing, sentimentalist lover

What were the contents of the burden of Christian in the "Pilgrim's Progress?"<sup>15</sup> He must have been taken for a pedlar travelling with his pack.

To think, as the sun goes down, what events have happened in the course of the day,—events of ordinary occurrence: as, the clocks have struck, the dead have been buried

Curious to imagine what murmurings and discontent would be excited, if any of the great so-called calamities of human beings were to be abolished,—as, for instance, death.

Trifles to one are matters of life and death to another. As, for instance, a farmer desires a brisk breeze to winnow his grain, and mariners, to blow them out of the reach of pirates.

A recluse, like myself, or a prisoner, to measure time by the progress of sunshine through his chamber.

Would it not be wiser for people to rejoice at all that they now sorrow for, and *vice versa*? To put on bridal garments at funerals, and mourning at weddings? For their friends to condole with them when they attained riches and honor, as only so much care added?

If in a village it were a custom to hang a funeral garland or other token of death on a house where some one had died, and there to let it remain till a death occurred elsewhere, and then to hang that same garland over the other house, it would have, methinks, a strong effect

No fountain so small but that Heaven may be imaged in its bosom.

Fame! Some very humble persons in a town may be said to possess it,—as, the penny-post, the town-crier, the constable,—and they are known to everybody; while many richer, more intellectual, worthier

<sup>15</sup> Often a subject of speculation for Hawthorne

persons are unknown by the majority of their fellow-citizens. Something analogous in the world at large.

The ideas of people in general are not raised higher than the roofs of the houses. All their interests extend over the earth's surface in a layer of that thickness. The meeting-house steeple reaches out of their sphere.<sup>16</sup>

Nobody will use other people's experience, nor have any of his own till it is too late to use it

Two lovers to plan the building of a pleasure-house on a certain spot of ground, but various seeming accidents prevent it. Once they find a group of miserable children there, once it is the scene where crime is plotted; at last the dead body of one of the lovers or of a dear friend is found there, and, instead of a pleasure-house, they build a marble tomb. The moral—that there is no place on earth fit for the site of a pleasure-house, because there is no spot that may not have been saddened by some human grief, stained by crime, or hallowed by death. It might be three friends who plan it, instead of two lovers; and the dearest one dies

Comfort of childless people. A married couple with ten children have been the means of bringing about ten funerals

A blind man on a dark night carried a torch, in order that people might see him, and not run against him, and direct him how to avoid dangers. . . .

*Salem, Oct. 4th. Union Street* [Family Mansion].— . . . Here I sit in my old accustomed chamber, where I used to sit in days gone by. . . . Here I have written many tales,—many that have been burned to ashes, many that doubtless deserved the same fate. This claims to be called a haunted chamber, for thousands upon thousands of visions have appeared to me in it, and some few of them have become visible to the world. If ever I should have a biographer, he ought to make great mention of this chamber in my memoirs, because so much of my lonely youth was wasted here, and here my mind and character were formed; and here I have been glad and hopeful, and here I have been despondent. And here I sat a long, long time, waiting patiently for the world to know me, and sometimes wondering why it did not know me sooner, or whether it would

<sup>16</sup> Compare "Sights from a Steeple," in *Twice-Told Tales*

ever know me at all,—at least, till I were in my grave. And sometimes it seemed as if I were already in the grave, with only life enough to be chilled and benumbed. But oftener I was happy,—at least, as happy as I then knew how to be, or was aware of the possibility of being. By and by, the world found me out in my lonely chamber, and called me forth,—not, indeed, with a loud roar of acclamation, but rather with a still, small voice,—and forth I went, but found nothing in the world that I thought preferable to my old solitude till now. And now I begin to understand why I was imprisoned so many years in this lonely chamber, and why I could never break through the viewless bolts and bars, for if I had sooner made my escape into the world, I should have grown hard and rough, and been covered with earthly dust, and my heart might have become callous by rude encounters with the multitude. But living in solitude till the fullness of time was come, I still kept the dew of my youth and the freshness of my heart. I used to think I could imagine all passions, all feelings, and states of the heart and mind, but how little did I know! . . . Indeed, we are but shadows, we are not endowed with real life, and all that seems most real about us is but the thinnest substance of a dream,—till the heart be touched. That touch creates us,—then we begin to be,—thereby we are beings of reality and inheritors of eternity. . . .

*Brook Farm, Oak Hill, April 13, 1841.*<sup>17</sup>— . . . Here I am in a polar Paradise! I know not how to interpret this aspect of nature,—whether it be of good or evil omen to our enterprise. But I reflect that the Plymouth pilgrims arrived in the midst of storm, and stepped ashore upon mountain snow-drifts, and, nevertheless, they prospered, and became a great people,—and doubtless it will be the same with us. I laud my stars, however, that you will not have your first impressions of (perhaps) our future home from such a day as this. . . . Through faith, I persist in believing that Spring and Summer will come in their due season, but the unregenerated man shivers within me, and suggests a doubt whether I may not have wandered within the precincts of the Arctic Circle, and chosen my heritage among everlasting snows . . . Provide yourself with a good

stock of furs, and, if you can obtain the skin of a polar bear, you will find it a very suitable summer dress for this region. . . .

I have not yet taken my first lesson in agriculture, except that I went to see our cows foddered, yesterday afternoon. We have eight of our own, and the number is now increased by a transcendental heifer belonging to Miss Margaret Fuller. She is very fractious, I believe, and apt to kick over the milk-pail.<sup>18</sup> . . . I intend to convert myself into a milk-maid this evening, but I pray Heaven that Mr. Ripley<sup>19</sup> may be moved to assign me the kindest cow in the herd, otherwise I shall perform my duty with fear and trembling.

I like my brethren in affliction very well, and, could you see us sitting round our table at meal-times, before the great kitchen fire, you would call it a cheerful sight. Mrs. B—— is a most comfortable woman to behold. She looks as if her ample person were stuffed full of tenderness,—indeed, as if she were all one great, kind heart. . . .

*April 14th, 10 a. m.*— . . . I did not milk the cows last night, because Mr. Ripley was afraid to trust them to my hands, or me to their horns, I know not which. But this morning I have done wonders. Before breakfast, I went out to the barn and began to chop hay for the cattle, and with such "nighteous vehemence," as Mr. Ripley says, did I labor, that in the space of ten minutes I broke the machine. Then I brought wood and replenished the fires, and finally went down to breakfast, and ate up a huge mound of buckwheat cakes. After breakfast, Mr. Ripley put a four-pronged instrument into my hands, which he gave me to understand was called a pitchfork; and he and Mr. Farley being armed with similar weapons, we all three commenced a gallant attack upon a heap of manure. This office being concluded, and I having purified myself, I sit down to finish this letter. . . .

Miss Fuller's cow hooks the other cows, and has made herself ruler of the herd, and behaves in a very tyrannical manner. . . . I shall make an excellent husbandman,—I feel the original Adam reviving within me. . . .

*April 16th.*— . . . I have milked a cow!!! . . . The herd has rebelled against the usurpation of Miss

<sup>17</sup> The following entries, made at Brook Farm, were written mainly in the form of letters dispatched periodically to Hawthorne's betrothed, Sophia Peabody.

<sup>18</sup> Some students of Hawthorne have read into this passage a special meaning, interpreting it as Hawthorne's criticism of Margaret Fuller.

<sup>19</sup> George Ripley was the manager of Brook Farm.

Fuller's heifer, and, whenever they are turned out of the barn, she is compelled to take refuge under our protection. So much did she impede my labors by keeping close to me, that I found it necessary to give her two or three gentle pats with a shovel, but still she preferred to trust herself to my tender mercies, rather than venture among the horns of the herd. She is not an amiable cow, but she has a very intelligent face, and seems to be of a reflective cast of character. I doubt not that she will soon perceive the expediency of being on good terms with the rest of the sisterhood.

I have not yet been twenty yards from our house and barn, but I begin to perceive that this is a beautiful place. The scenery is of a mild and placid character, with nothing bold in its aspect, but I think its beauties will grow upon us, and make us love it the more, the longer we live here. There is a brook, so near the house that we shall be able to hear its ripple in the summer evenings, . . . but, for agricultural purposes, it has been made to flow in a straight and rectangular fashion, which does it infinite damage as a picturesque object.

I have written this epistle in the parlor, while Farmer Ripley, and Farmer Farley, and Farmer Dismal View were talking about their agricultural concerns. So you will not wonder if it is not a classical piece of composition, either in point of thought or expression.

Mr. Ripley has bought four black pigs.

*April 22d.*— . . . What an abominable hand do I scribble! but I have been chopping wood, and turning a grindstone all the forenoon, and such occupations are likely to disturb the equilibrium of the muscles and sinews. It is an endless surprise to me how much work there is to be done in the world, but, thank God, I am able to do my share of it,—and my ability increases daily. What a great, broad-shouldered, elephantine personage I shall become by and by! . . .

I milked two cows this morning, and would send you some of the milk, only that it is mingled with that which was drawn forth by Mr. Dismal View and the rest of the brethren.

*April 28th* — . . . I was caught by a cold during my visit to Boston. It has not affected my whole frame, but took entire possession of my head, as being the weakest and most vulnerable part. Never did

anybody sneeze with such vehemence and frequency; and my poor brain has been in a thick fog, or, rather, it seemed as if my head were stuffed with coarse wool . . . Sometimes I wanted to wrench it off, and give it a great kick, like a football.

This annoyance has made me endure the bad weather with even less than ordinary patience; and my faith was so far exhausted that, when they told me yesterday that the sun was setting clear, I would not even turn my eyes towards the west. But this morning I am made all over anew, and have no greater remnant of my cold than will serve as an excuse for doing no work to-day . . .

I read no newspapers, and hardly remember who is President, and feel as if I had no more concern with what other people trouble themselves about than if I dwelt in another planet.

*May 1st* — . . . Every day of my life makes me feel more and more how seldom a fact is accurately stated, how, almost invariably, when a story has passed through the mind of a third person, it becomes, so far as regards the impression that it makes in further repetitions, little better than a falsehood, and this, too, though the narrator be the most truth-seeking person in existence. How marvellous the tendency is! . . . Is truth a fantasy which we are to pursue forever and never grasp? . . .

My cold has almost entirely departed. Were it a sunny day, I should consider myself quite fit for labors out of doors, but as the ground is so damp, and the atmosphere so chill, and the sky so sullen, I intend to keep myself on the sick-list this one day longer, more especially as I wish to read Carlyle on Heroes. . . .

There has been but one flower found in this vicinity—and that was an anemone, a poor, pale, shivering little flower, that had crept under a stone-wall for shelter. Mr. Farley found it, while taking a walk with me.

. . . This is May-Day! Alas, what a difference between the ideal and the real!

*May 4th.*— . . . My cold no longer troubles me, and all the morning I have been at work under the clear, blue sky, on a hill-side. Sometimes it almost seemed as if I were at work in the sky itself, though the material in which I wrought was the ore from our gold-mine. Nevertheless, there is nothing so unseemly and disagreeable in this sort of toil as you

could think It defiles the hands, indeed, but not the soul This gold ore is a pure and wholesome substance, else our mother Nature would not devour it so readily, and derive so much nourishment from it, and return such a rich abundance of good grain and roots in requital of it . . .

I do not believe that I should be patient here if I were not engaged in a righteous and heaven-blessed way of life When I was in the Custom House and then at Salem I was not half so patient . . .

We had some tableaux last evening, the principal characters being sustained by Mr Farley and Miss Ellen Slade They went off very well. . . .

I fear it is time for me—sod-compelling as I am—to take the field again.

*May 11th.*— . . . This morning I arose at milking time in good trim for work; and we have been employed partly in an Augcan labor of clearing out a wood-shed, and partly in carting loads of oak This afternoon I hope to have something to do in the field, for these jobs about the house are not at all to my taste.

*June 1st*— . . . I have been too busy to write a long letter by this opportunity, for I think this present life of mine gives me an antipathy to pen and ink, even more than my Custom House experience did. In the midst of toil, or after a hard day's work in the gold-mine, my soul obstinately refuses to be poured out on paper That abominable gold-mine! Thank God, we anticipate getting rid of its treasures in the course of two or three days! Of all hateful places that is the worst, and I shall never comfort myself for having spent so many days of blessed sunshine there It is my opinion that a man's soul may be buried and perish under a dung-heap, or in a furrow of the field, just as well as under a pile of money.

Mr. George Bradford will probably be here to-day, so that there will be no danger of my being under the necessity of laboring more than I like hereafter Meantime my health is perfect, and my spirits buoyant, even in the gold-mine.

*August 12th.*— . . . I am very well, and not at all weary, for yesterday's rain gave us a holiday, and, moreover, the labors of the farm are not so pressing as they have been. And, joyful thought! in a little more than a fortnight I shall be free from my bondage,— . . . free to enjoy Nature,—free to think and

feel! . . . Even my Custom House experience was not such a thralldom and weariness, my mind and heart were free Oh, labor is the curse of the world, and nobody can meddle with it without becoming proportionably brutified! Is it a praiseworthy matter that I have spent five golden months in providing food for cows and horses? It is not so

*August 18th.*—I am very well, only somewhat tired with walking half a dozen miles immediately after breakfast, and raking hay ever since We shall quite finish haying this week, and then there will be no more very hard or constant labor during the one other week that I shall remain a slave

*August 22d*— . . . I had an indispensable engagement in the bean-field, whither, indeed, I was glad to betake myself, in order to escape a parting scene with — He was quite out of his wits the night before, and I sat up with him till long past midnight. The farm is pleasanter now that he is gone; for his unappeasable wretchedness threw a gloom over everything. Since I last wrote, we have done haying, and the remainder of my bondage will probably be light. It will be a long time, however, before I shall know how to make a good use of leisure, either as regards enjoyment or literary occupation. . . .

It is extremely doubtful whether Mr. Ripley will succeed in locating his community on this farm. He can bring Mr. E—to no terms, and the more they talk about the matter, the further they appear to be from a settlement We must form other plans for ourselves, for I can see few or no signs that Providence purposes to give us a home here <sup>20</sup> I am weary, weary, thrice weary, of waiting so many ages Whatever may be my gifts, I have not hitherto shown a single one that may avail to gather gold I confess that I have strong hopes of good from this arrangement with M—, but when I look at the scanty avails of my past literary efforts, I do not feel authorized to expect much from the future. Well, we shall see. Other persons have bought large estates and built splendid mansions with such little books as I mean to write; so that perhaps it is not unreasonable to hope that mine may enable me to build a little cottage, or, at least, to buy or hire one. But I am becoming more and more convinced that we must

<sup>20</sup> Hawthorne had bought two shares of stock in the Brook Farm Association, presumably because he had planned, if the venture turned out to his liking, to bring his bride there

not lean upon this community. Whatever is to be done must be done by my own undivided strength. I shall not remain here through the winter, unless with an absolute certainty that there will be a house ready for us in the spring. Otherwise, I shall return to Boston,—still, however, considering myself an associate of the community, so that we may take advantage of any more favorable aspect of affairs. How much depends on these little books! Methinks if any thing could draw out my whole strength, it would be the motives that now press upon me. Yet, after all, I must keep these considerations out of my mind, because an external pressure always disturbs instead of assisting me.

*Salem, September 3d* — . . . But really I should judge it to be twenty years since I left Brook Farm, and I take this to be one proof that my life there was an unnatural and unsuitable, and therefore an unreal, one. It already looks like a dream behind me. The real Me was never an associate of the community; there has been a spectral Appearance there, sounding the horn at daybreak, and milking the cows, and hocking potatoes, and raking hay, toiling in the sun, and doing me the honor to assume my name. But this spectre was not myself. Nevertheless, it is somewhat remarkable that my hands have, during the past summer, grown very brown and rough, inasmuch that many people persist in believing that I, after all, was the aforesaid spectral horn-sounder, cow-milker, potato-hocker, and hay-raker. But such people do not know a reality from a shadow. Enough of nonsense. I know not exactly how soon I shall return to the farm. Perhaps not sooner than a fortnight from to-morrow. \* \* \*

*Brook Farm, September 22d, 1841.* — . . . Here I am again, slowly adapting myself to the life of this queer community, whence I seem to have been absent half a lifetime,—so utterly have I grown apart from the spirit and manners of the place. . . . I was most kindly received; and the fields and woods looked very pleasant in the bright sunshine of the day before yesterday. I have a friendlier disposition towards the farm, now that I am no longer obliged to toil in its stubborn furrows. Yesterday and to-day, however, the weather has been intolerable,—cold, chill, sullen, so that it is impossible to be on kindly terms with Mother Nature. . . .

I doubt whether I shall succeed in writing another

volume of Grandfather's Library while I remain here. I have not the sense of perfect seclusion which has always been essential to my power of producing anything. It is true, nobody intrudes into my room; but still I cannot be quiet. Nothing here is settled, everything is but beginning to arrange itself, and though I would seem to have little to do with aught beside my own thoughts, still I cannot but partake of the ferment around me. My mind will not be abstracted. I must observe, and think, and feel, and content myself with catching glimpses of things which may be wrought out hereafter. Perhaps it will be quite as well that I find myself unable to set seriously about literary occupation for the present. It will be good to have a longer interval between my labor of the body and that of the mind. I shall work to the better purpose after the beginning of November. Meantime I shall see these people and their enterprise under a new point of view, and perhaps be able to determine whether we have any call to cast in our lot among them. . . .

I do wish the weather would put off this sulky mood. Had it not been for the warmth and brightness of Monday, when I arrived here, I should have supposed that all sunshine had left Brook Farm forever. I have no disposition to take long walks in such a state of the sky; nor have I any buoyancy of spirit. I am a very dull person just at this time.

*September 25th.* — . . . One thing is certain. I cannot and will not spend the winter here. The time would be absolutely thrown away so far as regards any literary labor to be performed. . . .

The intrusion of an outward necessity into labors of the imagination and intellect is, to me, very painful. . . .

I had rather a pleasant walk to a distant meadow a day or two ago, and we found white and purple grapes in great abundance, ripe, and gushing with rich, pure juice when the hand pressed the clusters. Did you know what treasures of wild grapes there are in this land? If we dwell here, we will make our own wine. . . .

*September 27th.* — . . . I was elected to two high offices last night,—viz. to be trustee of the Brook Farm estate, and Chairman of the Committee on Finance! . . . From the nature of my office, I shall have the chief direction of all the money affairs of the community, the making of bargains, the

supervision of receipts and expenditures, etc., etc., etc. . .

My accession to these august offices does not at all decide the question of my remaining here permanently. I told Mr Ripley that I could not spend the winter at the farm, and that it was quite uncertain whether I returned in the spring.

Take no part, I beseech you, in the magnetic miracles.<sup>21</sup> I am unwilling that a power should be exercised on you of which we know neither the origin nor consequence, and the phenomena of which seem rather calculated to bewilder us than to teach us any truths about the present or future state of being. Supposing that the power arises from the transfusion of one spirit into another, it seems to me that the sacredness of an individual is violated by it, there would be an intruder into the holy of holies. I have no faith whatever that people are raised to the seventh heaven, or to any heaven at all, or that they gain any insight into the mysteries of life beyond death, by means of this strange science. Without distrusting that the phenomena have really occurred, I think that they are to be accounted for as the result of a material and physical, not of a spiritual, influence. Opium has produced many a brighter vision of heaven, I fancy, and just as susceptible of proof, as these. They are dreams. . . . And what delusion can be more lamentable and mischievous, than to mistake the physical and material for the spiritual? What so miserable as to lose the soul's true, though hidden, knowledge and consciousness of heaven in the midst of an earthborn vision? . . . I should as soon think of seeking revelations of the future state in the rottenness of the grave,—where so many do seek it.

The view which I take of this matter is caused by no want of faith in mysteries; but from a deep reverence of the soul, and of the mysteries which it knows within itself, but never transmits to the earthly eye and ear. Keep the imagination sane,—that is one of the truest conditions of communication with heaven.

*September 28th.*—A picnic party in the woods, yesterday, in honor of little Frank Dana's birthday, he being six years old. I strolled out, after dinner, with Mr. Bradford, and in a lonesome glade we met

<sup>21</sup> Sophia Peabody had written to Hawthorne to say that she was considering experimenting with hypnotism or mesmerism as a possible cure of ailments from which she suffered.

the apparition of an Indian chief, dressed in appropriate costume of blanket, feathers, and paint, and armed with a musket. Almost at the same time, a young gypsy fortune-teller came from among the trees, and proposed to tell my fortune. While she was doing this, the goddess Diana let fly an arrow, and hit me smartly in the hand. The fortune-teller and goddess were in fine contrast. Diana being a blonde, fair, quiet, with a moderate composure, and the gypsy (O G) a bright, vivacious, dark-haired, rich-complexioned damsel,—both of them very pretty, at least pretty enough to make fifteen years enchanting. Accompanied by these denizens of the wild wood, we went onward, and came to a company of fantastic figures, arranged in a ring for a dance or a game. There was a Swiss girl, an Indian squaw, a negro of the Jim Crow order, one or two foresters, and several people in Christian attire, besides children of all ages. Then followed childish games, in which the grown people took part with mirth enough,—while I, whose nature is to be a mere spectator both of sport and serious business, lay under the trees and looked on. Meanwhile, Mr. Emerson and Miss Fuller, who arrived an hour or two before, came forth into the little glade where we were assembled. Here followed much talk. The ceremonies of the day concluded with a cold collation of cakes and fruit. All was pleasant enough,—an excellent piece of work,—“would't were done!” It has left a fantastic impression on my memory, this intermingling of wild and fabulous characters with real and homely ones, in the secluded nook of the woods. I remember them, with the sunlight breaking through overshadowing branches, and they appearing and disappearing confusedly,—perhaps starting out of the earth, as if the every-day laws of nature were suspended for this particular occasion. There were the children, too, laughing and sporting about, as if they were at home among such strange shapes,—and anon bursting into loud uproar of lamentation, when the rude gambols of the merry archers chanced to overturn them. And apart, with a shrewd, Yankee observation of the scene, stands our friend Orange, a thick-set, sturdy figure, enjoying the fun well enough, yet, rather laughing with a perception of its nonsensicalness than at all entering into the spirit of the thing.

This morning I have been helping to gather apples. The principal farm labors at this time are ploughing for winter rye, and breaking up the greensward for



next year's crop of potatoes, gathering squashes, and not much else, except such year-round employments as milking. The crop of rye, to be sure, is in process of being threshed, at odd intervals.

I ought to have mentioned among the diverse and incongruous growths of the picnic party our two Spanish boys from Manilla,—Lucas, with his heavy features and almost mulatto complexion, and José, slighter, with rather a feminine face,—not a gay, girlish one, but grave, reserved, eying you sometimes with an earnest but secret expression, and causing you to question what sort of person he is.

*Friday, October 1st.*—I have been looking at our four swine. They appear the more a mystery the longer one gazes at them. It seems as if there were an important meaning to them, if one could find it out. One interesting trait in them is their perfect independence of character. They are not for man, and will not adapt themselves to his notions, as other beasts do, but are true to themselves, and act out their hoggish nature.

*Thursday, September 1st [1842, Concord]*—Mr. Thoreau dined with us yesterday. . . . He is a keen and delicate observer of nature,—a genuine observer,—which, I suspect, is almost as rare a character as even an original poet, and Nature, in return for his love, seems to adopt him as her especial child, and shows him secrets which few others are allowed to witness. He is familiar with beast, fish, fowl, and reptile, and has strange stories to tell of adventures and friendly passages with these lower brethren of mortality. Herb and flower, likewise, wherever they grow, whether in garden or wildwood, are his familiar friends. He is also on intimate terms with the clouds, and can tell the portents of storms. It is a characteristic trait, that he has a great regard for the memory of the Indian tribes, whose wild life would have suited him so well; and, strange to say, he seldom walks over a ploughed field without picking up an arrow-point, spearhead, or other relic of the red man, as if their spirits willed him to be the inheritor of their simple wealth.

With all this he has more than a tincture of literature,—a deep and true taste for poetry, especially for the elder poets, and he is a good writer,—at least he has written a good article, a rambling disquisition on Natural History, in the last *Dial*, which, he says, was chiefly made up from journals of his own ob-

servations. Methinks this article gives a very fair image of his mind and character,—so true, innate, and literal in observation, yet giving the spirit as well as letter of what he sees, even as a lake reflects its wooded banks, showing every leaf, yet giving the wild beauty of the whole scene. Then there are in the article passages of cloudy and dreamy metaphysics, and also passages where his thoughts seem to measure and attune themselves into spontaneous verse, as they rightfully may, since there is real poetry in them. There is a basis of good sense and of moral truth, too, throughout the article, which also is a reflection of his character, for he is not unwise to think and feel, and I find him a healthy and wholesome man to know.

After dinner (at which we cut the first watermelon and muskmelon that our garden has grown), Mr. Thoreau and I walked up the bank of the river, and at a certain point he shouted for his boat. Forthwith a young man paddled it across, and Mr. Thoreau and I voyaged farther up the stream, which soon became more beautiful than any picture, with its dark and quiet sheet of water, half shaded, half sunny, between high and wooded banks. The late rains have swollen the stream so much that many trees are standing up to their knees, as it were, in the water, and boughs, which lately swung high in air, now dip and drink deep of the passing wave. As to the poor cardinals which glowed upon the bank a few days since, I could see only a few of their scarlet hats, peeping above the tide. Mr. Thoreau managed the boat so perfectly, either with two paddles or with one, that it seemed instinct with his own will, and to require no physical effort to guide it. He said that, when some Indians visited Concord a few years ago, he found that he had acquired, without a teacher, their precise method of propelling and steering a canoe. Nevertheless he was desirous of selling the boat of which he was so fit a pilot, and which was built by his own hands; so I agreed to take it, and accordingly became possessor of the Musketaquid. I wish I could acquire the aquatic skill of the original owner. \* \* \*

*Saturday, April 8th.*—After journalizing yesterday afternoon, I went out and sawed and split wood till tea-time, then studied German (translating "Lenore"), with an occasional glance at a beautiful sunset, which I could not enjoy sufficiently by myself to induce me to lay aside the book. After lamplight,

finished "Lenore," and drowsed over Voltaire's "Candide," occasionally refreshing myself with a tune from Mr. Thoreau's musical-box, which he had left in my keeping. The evening was but a dull one.

I retired soon after nine, and felt some apprehension that the old Doctor's ghost would take this opportunity to visit me; but I rather think his former visitations have not been intended for me, and that I am not sufficiently spiritual for ghostly communication. At all events, I met with no disturbance of the kind, and slept soundly enough till six o'clock or thereabouts. The forenoon was spent with the pen in my hand, and sometimes I had the glimmering of an idea, and endeavored to materialize it in words, but on the whole my mind was idly vagrant, and refused to work to any systematic purpose. Between eleven and twelve I went to the post-office, but found no letter; then spent above an hour reading at the Athenæum. On my way home, I encountered Mr. Flint, for the first time these many weeks, although he is our next neighbor in one direction. I inquired if he could sell us some potatoes, and he promised to send half a bushel for trial. Also, he encouraged me to hope that he might buy a barrel of our apples. After my encounter with Mr. Flint, I returned to our lonely old abbey, opened the door without the usual heart-spring, ascended to my study, and began to read a tale of Tieck. Slow work, and dull work too! Anon, Molly, the cook, rang the bell for dinner,—a sumptuous banquet of stewed veal and macaroni, to which I sat down in solitary state. My appetite served me sufficiently to eat with, but not for enjoyment. Noth-

ing has a zest in my present widowed state. [Thus far I had written, when Mr. Emerson called.] After dinner, I lay down on the couch, with the *Dial* in my hand as a soporific, and had a short nap, then began to journalize.

Mr. Emerson came, with a sunbeam in his face; and we had as good a talk as I ever remember to have had with him. He spoke of Margaret Fuller, who, he says, has risen perceptibly into a higher state since their last meeting. [There rings the tea-bell.] Then we discoursed of Ellery Channing, a volume of whose poems is to be immediately published, with revisions by Mr. Emerson himself and Mr. Sam G. Ward. . . . He calls them "poetry for poets." Next Mr. Thoreau was discussed, and his approaching departure, in respect to which we agreed pretty well. . . . We talked of Brook Farm, and the singular moral aspects which it presents, and the great desirability that its progress and developments should be observed and its history written, also of C. N——, who, it appears, is passing through a new moral phasis. He is silent, inexpressive, talks little or none, and listens without response, except a sardonic laugh, and some of his friends think that he is passing into permanent eclipse. Various other matters were considered or glanced at, and finally, between five and six o'clock, Mr. Emerson took his leave. I then went out to chop wood, my allotted space for which had been very much abridged by his visit; but I was not sorry. I went on with the journal for a few minutes before tea, and have finished the present record in the setting sunshine and gathering dusk. . . .

FROM

### *Twice-Told Tales*

#### Preface (Edition of 1851)

The Author of "TWICE-TOLD TALES" has a claim to one distinction, which, as none of his literary brethren will care about disputing it with him, he need not be afraid to mention. He was, for a good many years, the obscurest man of letters in America.

These stories were published in magazines and annuals, extending over a period of ten or twelve years, and comprising the whole of the writer's young

manhood, without making (so far as he has ever been aware) the slightest impression on the public. One or two among them, the "Rill from the Town Pump," in perhaps a greater degree than any other, had a pretty wide newspaper circulation; as for the rest, he had no grounds for supposing that, on their first appearance, they met with the good or evil fortune to be read by anybody. Throughout the time above specified, he had no incitement to literary effort in a reasonable prospect of reputation or profit, nothing but the pleasure itself of composition—an

enjoyment not at all amiss in its way, and perhaps essential to the merit of the work in hand, but which, in the long run, will hardly keep the chill out of a writer's heart, or the numbness out of his fingers. To this total lack of sympathy, at the age when his mind would naturally have been most effervescent, the public owe it (and it is certainly an effect not to be regretted on either part) that the Author can show nothing for the thought and industry of that portion of his life, save the forty sketches, or thereabouts, 10 included in these volumes

Much more, indeed, he wrote; and some very small part of it might yet be rummaged out (but it would not be worth the trouble) among the dingy pages of fifteen-or-twenty-year-old periodicals, or within the shabby morocco covers of faded souvenirs. The remainder of the works alluded to had a very brief existence, but, on the score of brilliancy, enjoyed a fate vastly superior to that of their brotherhood, which succeeded in getting through the press. In a 20 word, the Author burned them without mercy or remorse, and, moreover, without any subsequent regret, and had more than one occasion to marvel that such very dull stuff, as he knew his condemned manuscripts to be, should yet have possessed inflammability enough to set the chimney on fire!

After a long while the first collected volume of the "Tales" was published.<sup>22</sup> By this time, if the Author had ever been greatly tormented by literary ambition (which he does not remember or believe to have been 30 the case), it must have perished, beyond resuscitation, in the dearth of nutriment. This was fortunate; for the success of the volume was not such as would have gratified a craving desire for notoriety. A moderate edition was "got rid of" (to use the publisher's very significant phrase) within a reasonable time, but apparently without rendering the writer or his productions much more generally known than before. The great bulk of the reading public probably ignored the book altogether. A few persons read it, and liked it 40 better than it deserved. At an interval of three or four years, the second volume was published, and encountered much the same sort of kindly, but calm, and very limited reception. The circulation of the two volumes was chiefly confined to New England; nor was it until long after this period, if it even yet be the case, that the Author could regard himself as addressing the American public, or, indeed, any

public at all. He was merely writing to his known or unknown friends.

As he glances over these long-forgotten pages, and considers his way of life while composing them, the Author can very clearly discern why all this was so. After so many sober years, he would have reason to be ashamed if he could not criticise his own work as fairly as another man's, and, though it is little his business, and perhaps still less his interest, he can hardly resist a temptation to achieve something of the sort. If writers were allowed to do so, and would perform the task with perfect sincerity and unreserve, their opinions of their own productions would often be more valuable and instructive than the works themselves.

At all events, there can be no harm in the Author's remarking that he rather wonders how the "TWICE-TOLD TALES" should have gained what vogue they did than that it was so little and so gradual. They have the pale tint of flowers that blossomed in too retired a shade,—the coolness of a meditative habit, which diffuses itself through the feeling and observation of every sketch. Instead of passion there is sentiment; and, even in what purport to be pictures of actual life, we have allegory, not always so warmly dressed in its habiliments of flesh and blood as to be taken into the reader's mind without a shiver. Whether from lack of power, or an unconquerable reserve, the Author's touches have often an effect of tameness, the merriest man can hardly contrive to laugh at his broadest humor; the tenderest woman, one would suppose, will hardly shed warm tears at his deepest pathos. The book, if you would see anything in it, requires to be read in the clear, brown, twilight atmosphere in which it was written; if opened in the sunshine, it is apt to look exceedingly like a volume of blank pages.

With the foregoing characteristics, proper to the production of a person in retirement (which happened to be the Author's category at the time), the book is devoid of others that we should quite as naturally look for. The sketches are not, it is hardly necessary to say, profound, but it is rather more remarkable that they so seldom, if ever, show any design on the writer's part to make them so. They have none of the abstruseness of idea, or obscurity of expression, which mark the written communications of a solitary mind with itself. They never need translation. It is, in fact, the style of a man of society.

<sup>22</sup> This first edition had appeared in 1837.

Every sentence, so far as it embodies thought or sensibility, may be understood and felt by anybody who will give himself the trouble to read it, and will take up the book in a proper mood

This statement of apparently opposite peculiarities leads us to a perception of what the sketches truly are. They are not the talk of a secluded man with his own mind and heart (had it been so, they could hardly have failed to be more deeply and permanently valuable), but his attempts, and very imperfectly<sup>10</sup> successful ones, to open an intercourse with the world

The Author would regret to be understood as speaking sourly or querulously of the slight mark made by his earlier literary efforts on the Public at large. It is so far the contrary, that he has been moved to write this Preface chiefly as affording him an opportunity to express how much enjoyment he has owed to these volumes, both before and since their publication. They are the memorials of very tranquil<sup>20</sup> and not unhappy years. They failed, it is true,—nor could it have been otherwise,—in winning an extensive popularity. Occasionally, however, when he deemed them entirely forgotten, a paragraph or an article, from a native or foreign critic, would gratify his instincts of authorship with unexpected praise,—too generous praise, indeed, and too little alloyed with censure, which, therefore, he learned the better to inflict upon himself. And, by the by, it is a very suspicious symptom of a deficiency of the popular<sup>30</sup> element in a book when it calls forth no harsh criticism. This has been particularly the fortune of the "TWICE-TOLD TALES." They made no enemies, and were so little known and talked about that those who read, and chanced to like them, were apt to conceive the sort of kindness for the book which a person naturally feels for a discovery of his own

This kindly feeling (in some cases, at least) extended to the Author, who, on the internal evidence of his sketches, came to be regarded as a mild, shy,<sup>40</sup> gentle, melancholic, exceedingly sensitive, and not very forcible man, hiding his blushes under an assumed name, the quaintness of which was supposed, somehow or other, to symbolize his personal and literary traits. He is by no means certain that some of his subsequent productions have not been influenced and modified by a natural desire to fill up so amiable an outline, and to act in consonance with the character assigned to him; nor, even now, could he

forfeit it without a few tears of tender sensibility. To conclude, however, these volumes have opened the way to most agreeable associations, and to the formation of imperishable friendships, and there are many golden threads interwoven with his present happiness, which he can follow up more or less directly, until he finds their commencement here, so that his pleasant pathway among realities seems to proceed out of the Dreamland of his youth, and to be bordered with just enough of its shadowy foliage to shelter him from the heat of the day. He is therefore satisfied with what the "TWICE-TOLD TALES" have done for him, and feels it to be far better than fame.  
Lenox, January 11, 1851

### *Sights from a Steeple*<sup>23</sup>

So! I have climbed high, and my reward is small  
Here I stand, with wearied knees, earth, indeed, at  
a dizzy depth below, but heaven far, far beyond me  
still. Oh that I could soar up into the very zenith,  
where man never breathed, nor eagle ever flew, and  
where the ethereal azure melts away from the eye,  
and appears only a deepened shade of nothingness!  
And yet I shiver at that cold and solitary thought.  
What clouds are gathering in the golden west, with  
direful intent against the brightness and the warmth  
of this summer afternoon! They are ponderous air  
ships, black as death, and freighted with the tempest;  
and at intervals their thunder, the signal guns of that  
uncarthy squadron, rolls distant along the deep of  
heaven. These nearer heaps of fleecy vapor—methinks  
I could roll and toss upon them the whole day long!  
—seem scattered here and there for the repose of  
tired pilgrims through the sky. Perhaps—for who can  
tell?—beautiful spirits are disporting themselves  
there, and will bless my mortal eye with the brief  
appearance of their curly locks of golden light and  
laughing faces, fair and faint as the people of a rosy  
dream. Or, where the floating mass so imperfectly ob-  
structs the color of the firmament, a slender foot and  
fairy limb, resting too heavily upon the frail support,

<sup>23</sup> This "article," as Hawthorne sometimes called his descriptive sketches, first published in *The Token* in 1831, is typical of a number of such prose essays included in *Twice-Told Tales*, as well as in subsequent collections of stories.

The moral of this selection is similar to Hawthorne's observation (*American Note-Books*, 37), "The ideas of people in general are not raised higher than the roofs of the houses. All their interests extend over the earth's surface in a layer of that thickness. The meeting-house steeple reaches out of their sphere."

may be thrust through, and suddenly withdrawn, while longing fancy follows them in vain. Yonder again is an airy archipelago, where the sunbeams love to linger in their journeyings through space. Every one of those little clouds has been dipped and steeped in radiance, which the slightest pressure might disengage in silvery profusion, like water wrung from a sea-maid's hair. Bright they are as a young man's visions, and, like them, would be realized in chillness, obscurity, and tears. I will look on them no more.

In three parts of the visible circle, whose centre is this spire, I discern cultivated fields, villages, white country seats, the waving lines of rivulets, little placid lakes, and here and there a rising ground, that would fain be termed a hill. On the fourth side is the sea, stretching away towards a viewless boundary, blue and calm, except where the passing anger of a shadow flits across its surface, and is gone. Hitherward, a broad inlet penetrates far into the land, on the verge of the harbor, formed by its extremity, is a town, and over it am I, a watchman, all-heeding and unheeded. Oh that the multitude of chimneys could speak, like those of Madrid, and betray, in smoky whispers, the secrets of all who, since their first foundation, have assembled at the hearths within! Oh that the Limping Devil of Le Sage<sup>24</sup> would perch beside me here, extend his wand over this contiguity of roofs, uncover every chamber, and make me familiar with their inhabitants! The most desuabable mode of existence might be that of a spiritualized Paul Pry, hovering invisible round man and woman, witnessing their deeds, searching into their hearts, borrowing brightness from their felicity and shade from their sorrow, and retaining no emotion peculiar to himself. But none of these things are possible, and if I would know the interior of brick walls, or the mystery of human bosoms, I can but guess.

Yonder is a fair street, extending north and south. The stately mansions are placed each on its carpet of verdant grass, and a long flight of steps descends from every door to the pavement. Ornamental trees—the broad-leaved horse-chestnut, the elm so lofty and bending, the graceful but infrequent willow, and others whereof I know not the names—grow thrivingly among brick and stone. The oblique rays of the sun are intercepted by these green citizens, and by

the houses, so that one side of the street is a shaded and pleasant walk. On its whole extent there is now but a single passenger, advancing from the upper end, and he, unless distance and the medium of a pocket spyglass do him more than justice, is a fine young man of twenty. He saunters slowly forward, slapping his left hand with his folded gloves, bending his eyes upon the pavement, and sometimes raising them to throw a glance before him. Certainly, he has a pensive air. Is he in doubt, or in debt? Is he, if the question be allowable, in love? Does he strive to be melancholy and gentleman-like? Or, is he merely overcome by the heat? But I bid him farewell for the present. The door of one of the houses—an aristocratic edifice, with curtains of purple and gold waving from the windows, is now opened, and down the steps come two ladies, swinging their parasols, and lightly arrayed for a summer ramble. Both are young, both are pretty, but methinks the left-hand lass is the fairer of the twain, and, though she be so serious at this moment, I could swear that there is a treasure of gentle fun within her. They stand talking a little while upon the steps, and finally proceed up the street. Meantime, as their faces are now turned from me, I may look elsewhere.

Upon that wharf, and down the corresponding street, is a busy contrast to the quiet scene which I have just noticed. Business evidently has its centre there, and many a man is wasting the summer afternoon in labor and anxiety, in losing riches or in gaining them, when he would be wiser to flee away to some pleasant country village, or shaded lake in the forest, or wild and cool sea-beach. I see vessels unloading at the wharf, and precious merchandise strewn upon the ground, abundantly as at the bottom of the sea, that market whence no goods return, and where there is no captain nor supercargo to render an account of sales. Here, the clerks are diligent with their paper and pencils, and sailors ply the block and tackle that hang over the hold, accompanying their toil with cries, long drawn and roughly melodious, till the bales and puncheons ascend to upper air. At a little distance a group of gentlemen are assembled round the door of a warehouse. Grave seniors be they, and I would wager—if it were safe in these times to be responsible for any one—that the least eminent among them might vie with old Vicentio,<sup>25</sup> that

<sup>24</sup> The Limping Devil is the title character of Le Sage's *Le Diable Boiteux* (1707).

<sup>25</sup> Old Vicentio of Pisa appears in Shakespeare's *Taming of the Shrew* as "a merchant of great traffic through the world."

incomparable trafficker of Pisa. I can even select the wealthiest of the company. It is the elderly personage, in somewhat rusty black, with powdered hair, the superfluous whiteness of which is visible upon the cape of his coat. His twenty ships are wafted on some of their many courses by every breeze that blows, and his name—I will venture to say, though I know it not—is a familiar sound among the far separated merchants of Europe and the Indies.

But I bestow too much of my attention in this quarter. On looking again to the long and shady walk, I perceive that the two fair girls have encountered the young man. After a sort of shyness in the recognition, he turns back with them. Moreover, he has sanctioned my taste in regard to his companions by placing himself on the inner side of the pavement, nearest the Venus to whom I—enacting, on a steeple top, the part of Paris on the top of Ida—adjudged the golden apple.

In two streets, conveying at right angles towards my watchtower, I distinguish three different processions. One is a proud array of voluntary soldiers, in bright uniform, resembling, from the height whence I look down, the painted veterans that garrison the windows of a toyshop. And yet, it stuns my heart, their regular advance, their nodding plumes, the sunflash on their bayonets and musket barrels, the roll of their drums ascending past me, and the life ever and anon piercing through—these things have wakened a warlike fire, peaceful though I be. Close to their rear marches a battalion of school-boys, ranged in crooked and irregular platoons, shouldering sticks, thumping a harsh and unripe clatter from an instrument of tin, and ridiculously aping the intricate manœuvres of the foremost band. Nevertheless, as slight differences are scarcely perceptible from a church spire, one might be tempted to ask, "Which are the boys?"—or rather, "Which the men?" But, leaving these, let us turn to the third procession, which, though sadder in outward show, may excite identical reflections in the thoughtful mind. It is a funeral. A hearse, drawn by a black and bony steed, and covered by a dusty pall, two or three coaches rumbling over the stones, their drivers half asleep, a dozen couple of careless mourners in their every-day attire; such was not the fashion of our fathers, when they carried a friend to his grave. There is now no doleful clang of the bell to proclaim sorrow to the town. Was the King of Terrors more awful in those days than in our own, that wisdom and philos-

ophy have been able to produce this change? Not so. Here is a proof that he retains his proper majesty. The military men and the military boys are wheeling round the corner, and meet the funeral full in the face. Immediately the drum is silent, all but the tap that regulates each simultaneous footfall. The soldiers yield the path to the dusty hearse and unpretending train, and the children quit their ranks, and cluster on the sidewalks, with timorous and instinctive curiosity. The mourners enter the churchyard at the base of the steeple, and pause by an open grave among the burial stones, the lightning glimmers on them as they lower down the coffin, and the thunder rattles heavily while they throw the earth upon its lid. Verily, the shower is near, and I tremble for the young man and the girls, who have now disappeared from the long and shady street.

How various are the situations of the people covered by the roofs beneath me, and how diversified are the events at this moment befalling them! The new born, the aged, the dying, the strong in life, and the recent dead, are in the chambers of these many mansions. The full of hope, the happy, the miserable, and the desperate, dwell together within the circle of my glance. In some of the houses over which my eyes roam so coldly, guilt is entering into hearts that are still tenanted by a debased and trodden virtue,—guilt is on the very edge of commission, and the impending deed might be averted, guilt is done, and the criminal wonders if it be irrevocable. There are broad thoughts struggling in my mind, and, were I able to give them distinctness, they would make their way in eloquence. Lo! the raindrops are descending.

The clouds, within a little time, have gathered over all the sky, hanging heavily, as if about to drop in one unbroken mass upon the earth. At intervals, the lightning flashes from their brooding hearts, quivers, disappears, and then comes the thunder, traveling slowly after its twin-born flame. A strong wind has sprung up, howls through the darkened streets, and raises the dust in dense bodies, to rebel against the approaching storm. The disbanded soldiers fly, the funeral has already vanished like its dead, and all people hurry homeward—all that have a home; while a few lounge by the corners, or trudge on desperately, at their leisure. In a narrow lane, which communicates with the shady street, I discern the rich old merchant, putting himself to the top of his speed, lest the rain should convert his hair powder to a paste

Unhappy gentleman! By the slow vehemence and painful moderation wherewith he journeys, it is but too evident that Podagra<sup>26</sup> has left its thrilling tenderness in his great toe. But yonder, at a far more rapid pace, come three other of my acquaintance, the two pretty girls and the young man, unseasonably interrupted in their walk. Their footsteps are supported by the risen dust,—the wind lends them its velocity,—they fly like three sea-birds driven landward by the tempestuous breeze. The ladies would not thus rival Atalanta<sup>27</sup> if they but knew that any one were at leisure to observe them. Ah! as they hasten onward, laughing in the angry face of nature, a sudden catastrophe has chanced. At the corner where the narrow lane enters into the street, they come plump against the old merchant, whose tortoise motion has just brought him to that point. He likes not the sweet encounter, the darkness of the whole air gathers speedily upon his visage, and there is a pause on both sides. Finally, he thrusts aside the youth with little courtesy, seizes an arm of each of the two girls, and plods onward, like a magician with a prize of captive faines. All this is easy to be understood. How disconsolate the poor lover stands! regardless of the rain that threatens an exceeding damage to his well-fashioned habiliments, till he catches a backward glance of mirth from a bright eye, and turns away with whatever comfort it conveys.

The old man and his daughters are safely housed, and now the storm lets loose its fury. In every dwell-

ing I perceive the faces of the chambermaids as they shut down the windows, excluding the impetuous shower, and shrinking away from the quick fiery glare. The large drops descend with force upon the slated roofs, and rise again in smoke. There is a rush and roar, as of a river through the air, and muddy streams bubble majestically along the pavement, whirl their dusky foam into the kennel, and disappear beneath iron grates. Thus did Arethusa<sup>28</sup> sink. I love not my station here aloft, in the midst of the tumult which I am powerless to direct or quell, with the blue lightning wrinkling on my brow, and the thunder muttering its first awful syllables in my ear. I will descend. Yet let me give another glance to the sea, where the foam breaks out in long white lines upon a broad expanse of blackness, or boils up in far distant points, like snowy mountain tops in the eddies of a flood, and let me look once more at the green plain, and little hills of the country, over which the giant of the storm is striding in robes of mist, and at the town, whose obscured and desolate streets might beseech a city of the dead; and turning a single moment to the sky, now gloomy as an author's prospects, I prepare to resume my station on lower earth. But stay! A little speck of azure has widened in the western heavens, the sunbeams find a passage, and go rejoicing through the tempest, and on yonder darkest cloud, born, like hallowed hopes, of the glory of another world and the trouble and tears of this, brightens forth the Rainbow!

1831

1837

<sup>26</sup> Gout.

<sup>27</sup> An Arcadian princess, who agreed to marry the suitor who could outrun her.

<sup>28</sup> "Thus did Arethusa sink" as, bathing in the Alpheus, she vanished from the sight of pursuing lover, a river god.

## FROM

*Mosses from an Old Manse**Young Goodman Brown*<sup>29</sup>

Young Goodman Brown came forth at sunset into the street at Salem village; but put his head back, after crossing the threshold, to exchange a parting kiss

<sup>29</sup> Published in the *New England Magazine* in April, 1835. This powerful tale depicting the perilous disillusionment and devastating effect of moral skepticism was doubtless suggested to Hawthorne by his reading in Cotton Mather's *Wonders of the Invisible World* such passages as the following:

"The Devil, exhibiting himself ordinarily as a small *Black Man*, had decoy'd a fearful knot of proud, froward, ignorant, envious and malicious Creatures, to list themselves in his horrid Service, by entering their Names in a Book by him tendred unto

with his young wife. And Faith, as the wife was aptly named, thrust her own pretty head into the street, letting the wind play with the pink ribbons of her cap while she called to Goodman Brown.

"Dearest heart," whispered she, softly and rather them. These Witches . . . have met in Hellish *Rendezvous* [sic], wherein the Confessors do say, they have had their Diabolical Sacraments, imitating the *Baptism* and the *Supper of our Lord*" (1693 ed., p. 17). "But that which makes this Descent [of the Devil] the more formidable, is the *multitude* and *quality* of Persons accused of an Interest in this *Witchcraft*, by the Efficacy of the *Spectres* which take their Name and Shape upon them . . . the Devils have obtain'd the power, to take on them the likeness of harmless people . . ." (*ibid.*, p. 19).

sadly, when her lips were close to his ear, "pr'hee put off your journey until sunrise and sleep in your own bed to-night. A lone woman is troubled with such dreams and such thoughts that she's afeared of herself sometimes. Pray tarry with me this night, dear husband, of all nights in the year."

"My love and my Faith," replied young Goodman Brown, "of all nights in the year, this one night must I tarry away from thee. My journey, as thou callest it, forth and back again, must needs be done 'twixt now <sup>10</sup> and sunrise. What, my sweet, pretty wife, dost thou doubt me already, and we but three months married?"

"Then God bless you!" said Faith, with the pink ribbons, "and may you find all well when you come back."

"Amen!" cried Goodman Brown. "Say thy prayers, dear Faith, and go to bed at dusk, and no harm will come to thee."

So they parted, and the young man pursued his <sup>20</sup> way until, being about to turn the corner by the meeting-house, he looked back and saw the head of Faith still peeping after him with a melancholy air, in spite of her pink ribbons.

"Poor little Faith!" thought he, for his heart smote him. "What a wretch am I to leave her on such an errand! She talks of dreams, too. Methought as she spoke there was trouble in her face, as if a dream had warned her what work is to be done to-night. But no, no; 't would kill her to think it. Well, she's a blessed <sup>30</sup> angel on earth; and after this one night I'll cling to her skirts and follow her to heaven."

With this excellent resolve for the future, Goodman Brown felt himself justified in making more haste on his present evil purpose. He had taken a dreary road, darkened by all the gloomiest trees of the forest, which barely stood aside to let the narrow path creep through, and closed immediately behind. It was all as lonely as could be, and there is this peculiarity in such a solitude, that the traveller knows not who <sup>40</sup> may be concealed by the innumerable trunks and the thick boughs overhead; so that with lonely footsteps he may yet be passing through an unseen multitude.

"There may be a devilish Indian behind every tree," said Goodman Brown to himself; and he glanced fearfully behind him as he added, "What if the devil himself should be at my very elbow!"

His head being turned back, he passed a crook of the road, and, looking forward again, beheld the

figure of a man, in grave and decent attire, seated at the foot of an old tree. He arose at Goodman Brown's approach and walked onward side by side with him.

"You are late, Goodman Brown," said he. "The clock of the Old South was striking as I came through Boston, and that is full fifteen minutes ago."

"Faith kept me back a while," replied the young man, with a tremor in his voice, caused by the sudden appearance of his companion, though not wholly unexpected.

It was now deep dusk in the forest, and deepest in that part of it where these two were journeying. As nearly as could be discerned, the second traveller was about fifty years old, apparently in the same rank of life as Goodman Brown, and bearing a considerable resemblance to him, though perhaps more in expression than features. Still they might have been taken for father and son. And yet, though the elder person was as simply clad as the younger, and as simple in manner too, he had an indescribable air of one who knew the world, and who would not have felt abashed at the governor's dinner table or in King William's court, were it possible that his affairs should call him thither. But the only thing about him that could be fixed upon as remarkable was his staff, which bore the likeness of a great black snake, so curiously wrought that it might almost be seen to twist and wriggle itself like a living serpent. This, of course, must have been an ocular deception, assisted <sup>by the uncertain light.</sup>

"Come, Goodman Brown," cried his fellow-traveller, "this is a dull place for the beginning of a journey. Take my staff, if you are so soon weary."

"Friend," said the other, exchanging his slow pace for a full stop, "having kept covenant by meeting thee here, it is my purpose now to return whence I came. I have scruples touching the matter thou wot'st of."

"Sayest thou so?" replied he of the serpent, smiling apart. "Let us walk on, nevertheless, reasoning as we go; and if I convince thee not thou shalt turn back. We are but a little way in the forest yet."

"Too far! too far!" exclaimed the goodman, unconsciously resuming his walk. "My father never went into the woods on such an errand, nor his father before him. We have been a race of honest men and good Christians since the days of the martyrs; and shall I be the first of the name of Brown that ever took this path and kept"—



"Such company, thou wouldst say," observed the elder person, interpreting his pause. "Well said, Goodman Brown! I have been as well acquainted with your family as with ever a one among the Puritans; and that's no trifle to say. I helped your grandfather, the constable, when he lashed the Quaker woman so smartly through the streets of Salem; and it was I that brought your father a pitch-pine knot, kindled at my own hearth, to set fire to an Indian village, in King Philip's war. They were my good friends, both; and many a pleasant walk have we had along this path, and returned merrily after midnight. I would fain be friends with you for their sake."

"If it be as thou sayest," replied Goodman Brown, "I marvel they never spoke of these matters, or, verily, I marvel not, seeing that the least rumor of the sort would have driven them from New England. We are a people of prayer, and good works to boot, and abide no such wickedness."

"Wickedness or not," said the traveller with the twisted staff, "I have a very general acquaintance here in New England. The deacons of many a church have drunk the communion wine with me, the selectmen of divers towns make me their chairman; and a majority of the Great and General Court are firm supporters of my interest. The governor and I, too—But these are state secrets."

"Can this be so?" cried Goodman Brown, with a state of amazement at his undisturbed companion. "Howbeit, I have nothing to do with the governor and council; they have their own ways, and are no rule for a simple husbandman like me. But, were I to go on with thee, how should I meet the eye of that good old man, our minister, at Salem village? Oh, his voice would make me tremble both Sabbath day and lecture day."

Thus far the elder traveller had listened with due gravity; but now burst into a fit of irrepressible mirth, shaking himself so violently that his snake-like staff actually seemed to wriggle in sympathy.

"Ha! ha! ha!" shouted he again and again; then composing himself, "Well, go on, Goodman Brown, go on; but, prithee, don't kill me with laughing."

"Well, then, to end the matter at once," said Goodman Brown, considerably nettled, "there is my wife, Faith. It would break her dear little heart; and I'd rather break my own."

"Nay, if that be the case," answered the other, "e'en go thy ways, Goodman Brown. I would not for

twenty old women like the one hobbling before us that Faith should come to any harm."

As he spoke he pointed his staff at a female figure on the path, in whom Goodman Brown recognized a very pious and exemplary dame, who had taught him his catechism in youth, and was still his moral and spiritual adviser, jointly with the minister and Deacon Gookin.

"A marvel, truly, that Goody Cloyse<sup>30</sup> should be so far in the wilderness at nightfall," said he. "But with your leave, friend, I shall take a cut through the woods until we have left this Christian woman behind. Being a stranger to you, she might ask whom I was consorting with and whither I was going."

"Be it so," said his fellow-traveller. "Betake you to the woods, and let me keep the path."

Accordingly the young man turned aside, but took care to watch his companion, who advanced softly along the road until he had come within a staff's length of the old dame. She, meanwhile, was making the best of her way, with singular speed for so aged a woman, and mumbling some indistinct words—a prayer, doubtless—as she went. The traveller put forth his staff and touched her withered neck with what seemed the serpent's tail.

"The devil!" screamed the pious old lady.

"Then Goody Cloyse knows her old friend?" observed the traveller, confronting her and leaning on his writhing stick.

"Ah, forsooth, and is it your worship indeed?" cried the good dame. "Yea, truly is it, and in the very image of my old gossip, Goodman Brown, the grandfather of the silly fellow that now is. But—would your worship believe it?—my broomstick hath strangely disappeared, stolen, as I suspect, by that unhanged witch, Goody Cory, and that, too, when I was all anointed with the juice of smallage, and cinquefoil, and wolf's bane"—

"Mingled with fine wheat and the fat of a new-born babe," said the shape of old Goodman Brown.

"Ah, your worship knows the recipe," cried the old lady, cackling aloud. "So, as I was saying, being all ready for the meeting, and no horse to ride on, I made up my mind to foot it; for they tell me there is a nice young man to be taken into communion to-night."

<sup>30</sup> Goody Cloyse and Goody Cory (mentioned in the fifth paragraph following) were historical characters (Sarah Cloyse and Martha Carrier) whom Hawthorne had read about. Both were tried for witchcraft and sentenced to death by Judge Hathorne in 1692.

But now your good worship will lend me your arm, and we shall be there in a twinkling."

"That can hardly be," answered her friend "I may not spare you my arm, Goody Cloyse, but here is my staff, if you will."

So saying, he threw it down at her feet, where, perhaps, it assumed life, being one of the rods which its owner had formerly lent to the Egyptian magi. Of this fact, however, Goodman Brown could not take cognizance. He had cast up his eyes in astonishment, and, looking down again, beheld neither Goody Cloyse nor the serpentine staff, but his fellow-traveller alone, who waited for him as calmly as if nothing had happened.

"That old woman taught me my catechism," said the young man, and there was a world of meaning in this simple comment.

They continued to walk onward, while the elder traveller exhorted his companion to make good speed and persevere in the path, discoursing so aptly that his arguments seemed rather to spring up in the bosom of his auditor than to be suggested by himself. As they went, he plucked a branch of maple to serve for a walking stick, and began to strip it of the twigs and little boughs, which were wet with evening dew. The moment his fingers touched them they became strangely withered and dried up as with a week's sunshine. Thus the pair proceeded, at a good free pace, until suddenly, in a gloomy hollow of the road, Goodman Brown sat himself down on the stump of a tree and refused to go any farther.

"Friend," said he, stubbornly, "my mind is made up. Not another step will I budge on this errand. What if a wretched old woman do choose to go to the devil when I thought she was going to heaven is that any reason why I should quit my dear Faith and go after her?"

"You will think better of this by and by," said his acquaintance, composedly. "Sit here and rest yourself a while; and when you feel like moving again, there is my staff to help you along."

Without more words, he threw his companion the maple stick, and was as speedily out of sight as if he had vanished into the deepening gloom. The young man sat a few moments by the roadside, applauding himself greatly, and thinking with how clear a conscience he should meet the minister in his morning walk, nor shrink from the eye of good old Deacon Gookin. And what calm sleep would be his that very

night, which was to have been spent so wickedly, but so purely and sweetly now, in the arms of Faith! Amidst these pleasant and praiseworthy meditations, Goodman Brown heard the tramp of horses along the road, and deemed it advisable to conceal himself within the verge of the forest, conscious of the guilty purpose that had brought him thither, though now so happily turned from it.

On came the hoof tramps and the voices of the riders, two grave old voices, conversing soberly as they drew near. These mingled sounds appeared to pass along the road, within a few yards of the young man's hiding-place, but, owing doubtless to the depth of the gloom at that particular spot, neither the travellers nor their steeds were visible. Though their figures brushed the small boughs by the wayside, it could not be seen that they intercepted, even for a moment, the faint gleam from the strip of bright sky athwart which they must have passed. Goodman Brown alternately crouched and stood on tiptoe, pulling aside the branches and thrusting forth his head as far as he durst without discerning so much as a shadow. It vexed him the more, because he could have sworn, were such a thing possible, that he recognized the voices of the minister and Deacon Gookin, jogging along quietly, as they were wont to do, when bound to some ordination or ecclesiastical council. While yet within hearing, one of the riders stopped to pluck a switch.

"Of the two, reverend sir," said the voice like the deacon's, "I had rather miss an ordination dinner than to-night's meeting. They tell me that some of our community are to be here from Falmouth and beyond, and others from Connecticut and Rhode Island, besides several of the Indian powwows, who, after their fashion, know almost as much deviltry as the best of us. Moreover, there is a goodly young woman to be taken into communion."

"Mighty well, Deacon Gookin!" replied the solemn old tones of the minister. "Spur up, or we shall be late. Nothing can be done, you know, until I get on the ground."

The hoofs clattered again; and the voices, talking so strangely in the empty air, passed on through the forest, where no church had ever been gathered or solitary Christian prayed. Whither, then, could these holy men be journeying so deep into the heathen wilderness? Young Goodman Brown caught hold of a tree for support, being ready to sink down on the

ground, faint and overburdened with the heavy sickness of his heart. He looked up to the sky, doubting whether there really was a heaven above him. Yet there was the blue arch, and the stars brightening in it.

"With heaven above and Faith below, I will yet stand firm against the devil!" cried Goodman Brown.

While he still gazed upward into the deep arch of the firmament and had lifted his hands to pray, a cloud, though no wind was stirring, hurried across the zenith and hid the brightening stars. The blue sky was still visible, except directly overhead, where this black mass of cloud was sweeping swiftly northward. Aloft in the air, as if from the depths of the cloud, came a confused and doubtful sound of voices. Once the listener fancied that he could distinguish the accents of towns-people of his own, men and women, both pious and ungodly, many of whom he had met at the communion table, and had seen others rioting at the tavern. The next moment, so indistinct were the sounds, he doubted whether he had heard aught but the murmur of the old forest, whispering without a wind. Then came a stronger swell of those familiar tones, heard daily in the sunshine at Salem village, but never until now from a cloud of night. There was one voice, of a young woman, uttering lamentations, yet with an uncertain sorrow, and entreating for some favor, which, perhaps, it would grieve her to obtain; and all the unseen multitude, both saints and sinners, seemed to encourage her so onward.

"Faith!" shouted Goodman Brown, in a voice of agony and desperation, and the echoes of the forest mocked him, crying, "Faith! Faith!" as if bewildered wretches were seeking her all through the wilderness.

The cry of grief, rage, and terror was yet piercing the night, when the unhappy husband held his breath for a response. There was a scream, drowned immediately in a louder murmur of voices, fading into far-off laughter, as the dark cloud swept away, leaving the clear and silent sky above Goodman Brown. But something fluttered lightly down through the air and caught on the branch of a tree. The young man seized it, and beheld a pink ribbon.

"My Faith is gone!" cried he, after one stupefied moment. "There is no good on earth; and sin is but a name. Come, devil; for to thee is this world given."

And, maddened with despair, so that he laughed loud and long, did Goodman Brown grasp his staff

and set forth again, at such a rate that he seemed to fly along the forest path rather than to walk or run. The road grew wilder and drearer and more faintly traced, and vanished at length, leaving him in the heart of the dark wilderness, still rushing onward with the instinct that guides mortal man to evil. The whole forest was peopled with frightful sounds—the creaking of the trees, the howling of wild beasts, and the yell of Indians, while sometimes the wind tolled like a distant church bell, and sometimes gave a broad roar around the traveller, as if all Nature were laughing him to scorn. But he was himself the chief horror of the scene, and shrank not from its other horrors.

"Ha! ha! ha!" roared Goodman Brown when the wind laughed at him. "Let us hear which will laugh loudest. Think not to frighten me with your devilry. Come witch, come wizard, come Indian powwow, come devil himself, and here comes Goodman Brown. You may as well fear him as he fear you."

In truth, all through the haunted forest there could be nothing more frightful than the figure of Goodman Brown. On he flew among the black pines, brandishing his staff with frenzied gestures, now giving vent to an inspiration of horrid blasphemy, and now shouting forth such laughter as set all the echoes of the forest laughing like demons around him. The fiend in his own shape is less hideous than when he rages in the breast of man. Thus sped the demoniac on his course, until, quivering among the trees, he saw a red light before him, as when the felled trunks and branches of a clearing have been set on fire, and throw up their lurid blaze against the sky, at the hour of midnight. He paused, in a lull of the tempest that had driven him onward, and heard the swell of what seemed a hymn, rolling solemnly from a distance with the weight of many voices. He knew the tune, it was a familiar one in the choir of the village meeting-house. The verse died heavily away, and was lengthened by a chorus, not of human voices, but of all the sounds of the benighted wilderness pealing in awful harmony together. Goodman Brown cried out, and his cry was lost to his own ear by its unison with the cry of the desert.

In the interval of silence he stole forward until the light glared full upon his eyes. At one extremity of an open space, hemmed in by the dark wall of the forest, arose a rock, bearing some rude, natural resemblance either to an altar or a pulpit, and surrounded by four

blazing pines, their tops aflame, then stems untouched, like candles at an evening meeting. The mass of foliage that had overgrown the summit of the rock was all on fire, blazing high into the night and fitfully illuminating the whole field. Each pendent twig and leafy festoon was in a blaze. As the red light arose and fell, a numerous congregation alternately shone forth, then disappeared in shadow, and again grew, as it were, out of the darkness, peopling the heart of the solitary woods at once.

"A grave and dark-clad company," quoth Goodman Brown.

In truth they were such. Among them, quivering to and fro between gloom and splendor, appeared faces that would be seen next day at the council board of the province, and others which, Sabbath after Sabbath, looked devoutly heavenward, and benignantly over the crowded pews, from the holiest pulpits in the land. Some affirm that the lady of the governor was there. At least there were high dames well known to her, and wives of honored husbands, and widows, a great multitude, and ancient maidens, all of excellent repute, and fair young girls, who trembled lest their mothers should espy them. Either the sudden gleams of light flashing over the obscure field bedazzled Goodman Brown, or he recognized a score of the church members of Salem village famous for their especial sanctity. Good old Deacon Gookin had arrived, and waited at the skirts of that venerable saint, his revered pastor. But, irreverently consorting with these grave, reputable, and pious people these elders of the church, these chaste dames and dewy virgins, there were men of dissolute lives and women of spotted fame, wretches given over to all mean and filthy vice, and suspected even of horrid crimes. It was strange to see that the good shrank not from the wicked, nor were the sinners abashed by the saints. Scattered also among their pale-faced enemies were the Indian priests, or powwows, who had often scared their native forest with more hideous incantations than any known to English witchcraft.

"But where is Faith?" thought Goodman Brown; and, as hope came into his heart, he trembled.

Another verse of the hymn arose, a slow and mournful strain, such as the pious love, but joined to words which expressed all that our nature can conceive of sin, and darkly hinted at far more. Unfathomable to mere mortals is the lore of fiends. Verse after verse was sung, and still the chorus of the

desert swelled between like the deepest tone of a mighty organ, and with the final peal of that dreadful anthem there came a sound, as if the roaring wind, the rushing streams, the howling beasts, and every other voice of the unconcerted wilderness were mingling and according with the voice of guilty man in homage to the prince of all. The four blazing pines threw up a loftier flame, and obscurely discovered shapes and visages of horror on the smoke wreaths above the impious assembly. At the same moment the fire on the rock shot redly forth and formed a glowing arch above its base, where now appeared a figure. With reverence be it spoken, the figure bore no slight similitude, both in garb and manner, to some grave divine of the New England churches.

"Bring forth the converts!" cried a voice that echoed through the field and rolled into the forest.

At the word, Goodman Brown stepped forth from the shadow of the trees and approached the congregation, with whom he felt a loathful brotherhood by the sympathy of all that was wicked in his heart. He could have well-nigh sworn that the shape of his own dead father beckoned him to advance, looking downward from a smoke wreath, while a woman, with dim features of despair, threw out her hand to warn him back. Was it his mother? But he had no power to retreat one step, nor to resist, even in thought, when the minister and good old Deacon Gookin seized his arms and led him to the blazing rock. Thither came also the slender form of a veiled female, led between Goody Cloyse, that pious teacher of the catechism, and Martha Carrier, who had received the devil's promise to be queen of hell. A rampant hag was she. And there stood the proselytes beneath the canopy of fire.

"Welcome, my children," said the dark figure, "to the communion of your race. Ye have found thus young your nature and your destiny. My children, look behind you!"

They turned; and flashing forth, as it were, in a sheet of flame, the fiend worshippers were seen, the smile of welcome gleamed darkly on every visage.

"There," resumed the sable form, "are all whom ye have revered from youth. Ye deemed them holier than yourselves and shrank from your own sin, contrasting it with their lives of righteousness and prayerful aspirations heavenward. Yet here are they all in my worshipping assembly. This night it shall be granted you to know their secret deeds: how hoary-

bearded elders of the church have whispered wanton words to the young maids of their households, how many a woman, eager for widows' weeds, has given her husband a drink at bedtime and let him sleep his last sleep in her bosom; how beardless youths have made haste to inherit their fathers' wealth; and how fair damsels—blush not, sweet ones—have dug little graves in the garden, and bidden me, the sole guest, to an infant's funeral. By the sympathy of your human hearts for sin ye shall scent out all the places 10 —whether in church, bedchamber, street, field, or forest—where crime has been committed, and shall exult to behold the whole earth one stain of guilt, one mighty blood spot. Far more than this. It shall be yours to penetrate, in every bosom, the deep mystery of sin, the fountain of all wicked arts, and which inexhaustibly supplies more evil impulses than human power—than my power at its utmost—can make manifest in deeds. And now, my children, look upon each other."

They did so; and, by the blaze of the hell-kindled torches, the wretched man beheld his Faith, and the wife her husband, trembling before that unhallowed altar.

"Lo, there ye stand, my children," said the figure, in a deep and solemn tone, almost sad with its despairing awfulness, as if his once angelic nature could yet mourn for our miserable race. "Depending upon one another's hearts, ye had still hoped that virtue were not all a dream. Now are ye undeceived. 30 Evil is the nature of mankind. Evil must be your only happiness. Welcome again, my children, to the communion of your race."

"Welcome," repeated the fiend worshippers, in one cry of despair and triumph.

And there they stood, the only pair, as it seemed, who were yet hesitating on the verge of wickedness in this dark world. A basin was hollowed, naturally, in the rock. Did it contain water, reddened by the lurid light? or was it blood? or, perchance, a liquid 40 flame? Herein did the shape of evil dip his hand and prepare to lay the mark of baptism upon their foreheads, that they might be partakers of the mystery of sin, more conscious of the secret guilt of others, both in deed and thought, than they could now be of their own. The husband cast one look at his pale wife, and Faith at him. What polluted wretches would the next glance show them to each other, shuddering alike at what they disclosed and what they saw!

"Faith! Faith!" cried the husband, "look up to heaven, and resist the wicked one."

Whether Faith obeyed he knew not. Hardly had he spoken when he found himself amid calm night and solitude, listening to a roar of the wind which died heavily away through the forest. He staggered against the rock, and felt it chill and damp, while a hanging twig, that had been all on fire, besprinkled his cheek with the coldest dew.

The next morning young Goodman Brown came slowly into the street of Salem village, staring around him like a bewildered man. The good old minister was taking a walk along the graveyard to get an appetite for breakfast and meditate his sermon, and bestowed a blessing, as he passed, on Goodman Brown. He shrank from the venerable saint as if to avoid an anathema. Old Deacon Gookin was at domestic worship, and the holy words of his prayer were heard through the open window. "What God 20 doth the wizard pray to?" quoth Goodman Brown. Goody Cloyse, that excellent old Christian, stood in the early sunshine at her own lattice, catechizing a little girl who had brought her a pint of morning's milk. Goodman Brown snatched away the child as from the grasp of the fiend himself. Turning the corner by the meeting-house, he spied the head of Faith, with the pink ribbons, gazing anxiously forth, and bursting into such joy at sight of him that she skipped along the street and almost kissed her husband before the whole village. But Goodman Brown looked sternly and sadly into her face, and passed on without a greeting.

Had Goodman Brown fallen asleep in the forest and only dreamed a wild dream of a witch-meeting?

Be it so if you will; but, alas! it was a dream of evil omen for young Goodman Brown. A stern, a sad, a darkly meditative, a distrustful, if not a desperate man did he become from the night of that fearful dream. On the Sabbath day, when the congregation were singing a holy psalm, he could not listen because an anthem of sin rushed loudly upon his ear and drowned all the blessed strain. When the minister spoke from the pulpit with power and fervid eloquence, and, with his hand on the open Bible, of the sacred truths of our religion, and of saint-like lives and triumphant deaths, and of future bliss or misery unutterable, then did Goodman Brown turn pale, dreading lest the roof should thunder down upon the

gray blasphemer and his hearers. Often, awaking suddenly at midnight, he shrank from the bosom of Faith, and at morning or eventide, when the family knelt down at prayer, he scowled and muttered to himself, and gazed steinly at his wife, and turned away. And when he had lived long, and was boine to

his grave a hoary corpse, followed by Faith, an aged woman, and children and grandchildren, a goodly proccssion, besides neighbors not a few, they carved no hopeful verse upon his tombstone, for his dying hour was gloom.

April, 1835

1846

FROM

### *Twice-Told Tales*

#### *Wakefield*<sup>31</sup>

In some old magazine or newspaper I recollect a story, told as truth, of a man—let us call him Wake-<sup>10</sup> field—who absented himself for a long time from his wife. The fact, thus abstractedly stated, is not very uncommon, nor—without a proper distinction of circumstances—to be condemned either as naughty or nonsensical. Howbeit, this, though far from the most aggravated, is perhaps the strangest, instance on record, of marital delinquency; and, moreover, as remarkable a freak as may be found in the whole list of human oddities. The wedded couple lived in London. The man, under pretence of going a journey,<sup>20</sup> took lodgings in the next street to his own house, and there, unheard of by his wife or friends, and without the shadow of a reason for such self-banishment, dwelt upwards of twenty years. During that period, he beheld his home every day, and frequently the forlorn Mrs. Wakefield. And after so great a gap in his matrimonial felicity—when his death was reckoned certain, his estate settled, his name dismissed from memory, and his wife, long, long ago, resigned to her autumnal widowhood—he entered the door one evening,<sup>30</sup> quietly, as from a day's absence, and became a loving spouse till death.

This outline is all that I remember. But the incident, though of the purest originality, unexampled, and probably never to be repeated, is one, I think, which appeals to the gencious sympathies of mankind. We know, each for himself, that none of us would perpetrate such a folly, yet feel as if some other

might. To my own contemplations, at least, it has often recurred, always exciting wonder, but with a sense that the story must be true, and a conception of its hero's character. Whenever any subject so forcibly affects the mind, time is well spent in thinking of it. If the reader choose, let him do his own meditation; or if he prefer to ramble with me through the twenty years of Wakefield's vagary, I bid him welcome, trusting that there will be a pervading spirit and a moral, even should we fail to find them, done up neatly, and condensed into the final sentence. Thought has always its efficacy, and every striking incident its moral.

What sort of a man was Wakefield? We are free to shape out our own idea, and call it by his name. He was now in the meridian of life, his matrimonial affections, never violent, were sobered into a calm, habitual sentiment, of all husbands, he was likely to be the most constant, because a certain sluggishness would keep his heart at rest, wherever it might be placed. He was intellectual, but not actively so; his mind occupied itself in long and lazy musings, that ended to no purpose, or had not vigor to attain it; his thoughts were seldom so energetic as to seize hold of words. Imagination, in the proper meaning of the term, made no part of Wakefield's gifts. With a cold but not depraved nor wandering heart, and a mind never feverish with riotous thoughts, nor perplexed with originality, who could have anticipated that our friend would entitle himself to a foremost place among the doers of eccentric deeds? Had his acquaintances been asked, who was the man in London

<sup>31</sup> This was published in the *New England Magazine* in May, 1835. Hawthorne said that the suggestion for "Wakefield" came to him from an account which he read in "some old magazine or newspaper." What is particularly interesting about Hawthorne's working out of this story is that the author is little concerned with the conclusion proper of the narrative—with the problem, for example, of how Wakefield explains his peculiar

conduct to his wife or to his friends. What interests Hawthorne more is the motivation of Wakefield's mind that prompted him to alienate himself from society in a way to run the "fearful risk" of becoming an "Outcast of the Universe." This theme of isolation is one of the most persistent in Hawthorne's writings. Many of his short stories and all of his novels turn upon various aspects of the same motif.

the surest to perform nothing to-day which should be remembered on the morrow, they would have thought of Wakefield. Only the wife of his bosom might have hesitated. She, without having analyzed his character, was partly aware of a quiet selfishness, that had rusted into his inactive mind; of a peculiar sort of vanity, the most uneasy attribute about him, of a disposition to craft, which had seldom produced more positive effects than the keeping of petty secrets, hardly worth revealing, and, lastly, of what she called a little strangeness, sometimes, in the good man. This latter quality is indefinable, and perhaps nonexistent.

Let us now imagine Wakefield bidding adieu to his wife. It is the dusk of an October evening. His equipment is a dark great-coat, a hat covered with an oilcloth, top-boots, an umbrellâ in one hand and a small portmanteau in the other. He has informed Mrs. Wakefield that he is to take the night coach into the country. She would fain inquire the length of his journey, its object, and the probable time of his return; but, indulgent to his harmless love of mystery, interrogates him only by a book. He tells her not to expect him positively by the return coach, nor to be alarmed should he tarry three or four days, but, at all events, to look for him at supper on Friday evening. Wakefield himself, be it considered, has no suspicion of what is before him. He holds out his hand, she gives her own, and meets his parting kiss in the matter-of-course way of a ten years' matrimony; and forth goes the middle-aged Mr. Wakefield, almost resolved to perplex his good lady by a whole week's absence. After the door has closed behind him, she perceives it thrust partly open, and a vision of her husband's face, through the aperture, smiling at her, and gone in a moment. For the time, this little incident is dismissed without a thought. But, long afterwards, when she has been more years a widow than a wife, that smile recurs, and flickers across all her reminiscences of Wakefield's visage. In her many musings, she surrounds the original smile with a multitude of fantasies, which make it strange and awful: as, for instance, if she imagines him in a coffin, that parting look is frozen on his pale features; or, if she dreams of him in heaven, still his blessed spirit wears a quiet and crafty smile. Yet, for its sake, when all others have given him up for dead, she sometimes doubts whether she is a widow.

But our business is with the husband. We must hurry after him along the street, ere he lose his indi-

viduality, and melt into the great mass of London life. It would be vain searching for him there. Let us follow close at his heels, therefore, until, after several superfluous turns and doublings, we find him comfortably established by the fireside of a small apartment, previously bespoken. He is in the next street to his own, and at his journey's end. He can scarcely trust his good fortune, in having got thither unperceived—recollecting that, at one time, he was delayed by the throng, in the very focus of a lighted lantern, and, again, there were footsteps that seemed to tread behind his own, distinct from the multitudinous tramp around him, and, anon, he heard a voice shouting afar, and fancied that it called his name. Doubtless, a dozen busybodies had been watching him, and told his wife the whole affair. Poor Wakefield! Little knowest thou thine own insignificance in this great world! No mortal eye but mine has traced thee. Go quietly to thy bed, foolish man, and, on the morrow, if thou wilt be wise, get thee home to good Mrs. Wakefield, and tell her the truth. Remove not thyself, even for a little week, from thy place in her chaste bosom. Were she, for a single moment, to deem thee dead, or lost, or lastingly divided from her, thou wouldst be wofully conscious of a change in thy true wife forever after. It is perilous to make a chasm in human affections, not that they gape so long and wide—but so quickly close again!

Almost repenting of his frolic, or whatever it may be termed, Wakefield lies down betimes, and starting from his first nap, spreads forth his arms into the wide and solitary waste of the unaccustomed bed. "No,"—thinks he, gathering the bedclothes about him,—"I will not sleep alone another night."

In the morning he rises earlier than usual, and sets himself to consider what he really means to do. Such are his loose and rambling modes of thought that he has taken this very singular step with the consciousness of a purpose, indeed, but without being able to define it sufficiently for his own contemplation. The vagueness of the project, and the convulsive effort with which he plunges into the execution of it, are equally characteristic of a feeble-minded man. Wakefield sifts his ideas, however, as minutely as he may, and finds himself curious to know the progress of matters at home—how his exemplary wife will endure her widowhood of a week, and, briefly, how the little sphere of creatures and circumstances, in which he was a central object, will be affected by his removal.

A morbid vanity, therefore, lies nearest the bottom of the affair. But, how is he to attain his ends? Not, certainly, by keeping close in this comfortable lodging, where, though he slept and awoke in the next street to his home, he is as effectually abroad as if the stagecoach had been whirling him away all night. Yet, should he reappear, the whole project is knocked in the head. His poor brains being hopelessly puzzled with this dilemma, he at length ventures out, partly resolving to cross the head of the street, and send one hasty glance towards his forsaken domicile. Habit—for he is a man of habits—takes him by the hand, and guides him, wholly unaware, to his own door, where, just at the critical moment, he is aroused by the scraping of his foot upon the step. Wakefield! whither are you going?

At that instant his fate was turning on the pivot. Little dreaming of the doom to which his first backward step devotes him, he hurries away, breathless with agitation hitherto unfelt, and hardly dares turn his head at the distant corner. Can it be that nobody caught sight of him? Will not the whole household—the decent Mrs. Wakefield, the smart maid servant, and the dirty little footboy—raise a hue and cry, through London streets, in pursuit of their fugitive lord and master? Wonderful escape! He gathers courage to pause and look homeward, but is perplexed with a sense of change about the familiar edifice, such as affects us all, when, after a separation of months or years, we again see some hill or lake, or work of art, with which we were friends of old. In ordinary cases, this indescribable impression is caused by the comparison and contrast between our imperfect reminiscences and the reality. In Wakefield, the magic of a single night has wrought a similar transformation, because, in that brief period, a great moral change has been effected. But this is a secret from himself. Before leaving the spot, he catches a far and momentary glimpse of his wife, passing athwart the front window, with her face turned towards the head of the street. The crafty nincompoop takes to his heels, scared with the idea that, among a thousand such atoms of mortality, her eye must have detected him. Right glad is his heart, though his brain be somewhat dizzy, when he finds himself by the coal fire of his lodgings.

So much for the commencement of this long whimwham. After the initial conception, and the stirring up of the man's sluggish temperament to put it

in practice, the whole matter evolves itself in a natural train. We may suppose him, as the result of deep deliberation, buying a new wig, of reddish hair, and selecting sundry garments, in a fashion unlike his customary suit of brown, from a Jew's old-clothes bag. It is accomplished. Wakefield is another man. The new system being now established, a retrograde movement to the old would be almost as difficult as the step that placed him in his unparalleled position. Furthermore, he is rendered obstinate by a sulkiness occasionally incident to his temper, and brought on at present by the inadequate sensation which he conceives to have been produced in the bosom of Mrs. Wakefield. He will not go back until she be frightened half to death. Well, twice or thrice has she passed before his sight, each time with a heavier step, a paler cheek, and more anxious brow, and in the third week of his nonappearance he detects a portent of evil entering the house, in the guise of an apothecary. Next day the knocker is muffled. Towards nightfall comes the chariot of a physician, and deposits its big-wigged and solemn burden at Wakefield's door, whence, after a quarter of an hour's visit, he emerges, perchance the herald of a funeral. Dear woman! Will she die? By this time, Wakefield is excited to something like energy of feeling, but still lingers away from his wife's bedside, pleading with his conscience that she must not be disturbed at such a juncture. If aught else restrains him, he does not know it. In the course of a few weeks she gradually recovers; the crisis is over; her heart is sad, perhaps, but quiet, and, let him return soon or late, it will never be feverish for him again. Such ideas glimmer through the mist of Wakefield's mind, and render him indistinctly conscious that an almost impassable gulf divides his hired apartment from his former home. "It is but in the next street!" he sometimes says. Fool! it is in another world. Hitherto, he has put off his return from one particular day to another, henceforward, he leaves the precise time undetermined. Not to-morrow—probably next week—pretty soon. Poor man! The dead have nearly as much chance of revisiting their earthly homes as the self-banished Wakefield.

Would that I had a folio to write, instead of an article of a dozen pages! Then might I exemplify how an influence beyond our control lays its strong hand on every deed which we do, and weaves its consequences into an iron tissue of necessity. Wakefield is spell-bound. We must leave him, for ten years or so,



to haunt around his house, without once crossing the threshold, and to be faithful to his wife, with all the affection of which his heart is capable, while he is slowly fading out of hers. Long since, it must be remarked, he had lost the perception of singularity in his conduct.

Now for a scene! Amid the throng of a London street we distinguish a man, now waxing elderly, with few characteristics to attract careless observers, yet bearing, in his whole aspect, the handwriting of no common fate, for such as have the skill to read it. He is meagre, his low and narrow forehead is deeply wrinkled, his eyes, small and lustreless, sometimes wander apprehensively about him, but oftener seem to look inward. He bends his head, and moves with an indescrutable obliquity of gait, as if unwilling to display his full front to the world. Watch him long enough to see what we have described, and you will allow that circumstances—which often produce remarkable men from nature's ordinary handiwork—<sup>20</sup> have produced one such here. Next, leaving him to sidle along the footwalk, cast your eyes in the opposite direction, where a portly female, considerably in the wane of life, with a prayer-book in her hand, is proceeding to yonder church. She has the placid mien of settled widowhood. Her regrets have either died away, or have become so essential to her heart, that they would be poorly exchanged for joy. Just as the lean man and well-conditioned woman are passing, a slight obstruction occurs, and brings these two figures <sup>30</sup> directly in contact. Their hands touch; the pressure of the crowd forces her bosom against his shoulder; they stand, face to face, staring into each other's eyes. After a ten years' separation, thus Wakefield meets his wife! The throng eddies away, and carries them asunder. The sober widow, resuming her former pace, proceeds to church, but pauses in the portal, and throws a perplexed glance along the street. She passes in, however, opening her prayer-book as she goes. And the man! with so wild a face that busy and selfish <sup>40</sup> London stands to gaze after him, he hurries to his lodgings, bolts the door, and throws himself upon the bed. The latent feelings of years break out; his feeble mind acquires a brief energy from their strength, all the miserable strangeness of his life is revealed to him at a glance: and he cries out, passionately, "Wakefield! Wakefield! You are mad!"

Perhaps he was so. The singularity of his situation must have so moulded him to himself, that, con-

sidered in regard to his fellow-creatures and the business of life, he could not be said to possess his right mind. He had contrived, or rather he had happened, to dis sever himself from the world—to vanish—to give up his place and privileges with living men, without being admitted among the dead. The life of a hermit is nowise parallel to his. He was in the bustle of the city, as of old, but the crowd swept by and saw him not, he was, we may figuratively say, always beside his wife and at his hearth, yet must never feel the warmth of the one nor the affection of the other. It was Wakefield's unprecedented fate to retain his original share of human sympathies, and to be still involved in human interests, while he had lost his reciprocal influence on them. It would be a most curious speculation to trace out the effect of such circumstances on his heart and intellect, separately, and in unison. Yet, changed as he was, he would seldom be conscious of it, but deem himself the same man as ever, glimpses of the truth, indeed, would come, but only for the moment, and still he would keep saying, "I shall soon go back!"—nor reflect that he had been saying so for twenty years.

I conceive, also, that these twenty years would appear, in the retrospect, scarcely longer than the week to which Wakefield had at first limited his absence. He would look on the affair as no more than an interlude in the main business of his life. When, after a little while more, he should deem it time to reenter his parlor, his wife would clap her hands for joy, on beholding the middle-aged Mr. Wakefield. Alas, what a mistake! Would Time but await the close of our favorite follies, we should be young men, all of us, and till Doomsday.

One evening, in the twentieth year since he vanished, Wakefield is taking his customary walk towards the dwelling which he still calls his own. It is a gusty night of autumn, with frequent showers that patter down upon the pavement, and are gone before a man can put up his umbrella. Pausing near the house, Wakefield discerns, through the parlor windows of the second floor, the red glow and the glimmer and fitful flash of a comfortable fire. On the ceiling appears a grotesque shadow of good Mrs. Wakefield. The cap, the nose and chin, and the broad waist, form an admirable caricature, which dances, moreover, with the up-flickering and down-sinking blaze, almost too merrily for the shade of an elderly widow. At this instant a shower chances to fall, and is driven,

by the unmannerly gust, full into Wakefield's face and bosom. He is quite penetrated with its autumnal chill. Shall he stand, wet and shivering here, when his own hearth has a good fire to warm him, and his own wife will run to fetch the gray coat and small-clothes, which, doubtless, she has kept carefully in the closet of her bed chamber? No! Wakefield is no such fool. He ascends the steps—heavily!—for twenty years have stiffened his legs since he came down—but he knows it not. Stay, Wakefield! Would you go to the sole home that is left you? Then step into your grave! The door opens. As he passes in, we have a parting glimpse of his visage, and recognize the crafty smile, which was the precursor of the little joke that he has ever since been playing off at his wife's expense. How unmercifully has he quizzed the poor woman! Well, a good night's rest to Wakefield!

This happy event—supposing it to be such—could only have occurred at an unpremeditated moment. We will not follow our friend across the threshold. He has left us much food for thought, a portion of which shall lend its wisdom to a moral, and be shaped into a figure. Amid the seeming confusion of our mysterious world, individuals are so nicely adjusted to a system, and systems to one another and to a whole, that, by stepping aside for a moment, a man exposes himself to a fearful risk of losing his place forever. Like Wakefield, he may become, as it were, the Outcast of the Universe.

May, 1835

1837

### *The Gray Champion*<sup>32</sup>

There was once a time when New England groaned under the actual pressure of heavier wrongs than those threatened ones which brought on the Revolution. James II., the bigoted successor of Charles the Voluptuous, had annulled the charters of all the colonies, and sent a harsh and unprincipled soldier to

take away our liberties and endanger our religion. The administration of Sir Edmund Andros lacked scarcely a single characteristic of tyranny: a Governor and Council, holding office from the King, and wholly independent of the country, laws made and taxes levied without concurrence of the people, immediate or by their representatives, the rights of private citizens violated, and the titles of all landed property declared void; the voice of complaint stifled by restrictions on the press, and, finally, disaffection overawed by the first band of mercenary troops that ever marched on our free soil. For two years our ancestors were kept in sullen submission by that filial love which had invariably secured their allegiance to the mother country, whether its head chanced to be a Parliament, Protector, or Popish Monarch. Till these evil times, however, such allegiance has been merely nominal, and the colonists had ruled themselves, enjoying far more freedom than is even yet the privilege of the native subjects of Great Britain.

At length a rumor reached our shores that the Prince of Orange had ventured on an enterprise, the success of which would be the triumph of civil and religious rights and the salvation of New England. It was but a doubtful whisper, it might be false, or the attempt might fail; and, in either case, the man that stirred against King James would lose his head. Still the intelligence produced a marked effect. The people smiled mysteriously in the streets, and threw bold glances at their oppressors, while far and wide there was a subdued and silent agitation, as if the slightest signal would rouse the whole land from its sluggish despondency. Aware of their danger, the rulers resolved to avert it by an imposing display of strength, and perhaps to confirm their despotism by yet harsher measures. One afternoon in April, 1689, Sir Edmund Andros and his favorite councillors, being warm with wine, assembled the redcoats of the Governor's Guard, and made their appearance in the

<sup>32</sup> This story, published in the *New England Magazine* in January, 1835, Hawthorne undoubtedly adapted from an account of the "Angel of Hadley" as narrated by President Ezra Stiles of Yale in his *History of the Three Judges of King Charles I* (1794).

"That pious congregation were observing a Fast at Hadley on occasion of the war, and being at public worship in the meeting-house, on a Fast day, September 1, 1675, were suddenly surrounded and surprized by a body of Indians. . . . The people immediately took to their arms, but were thrown into great consternation and confusion. . . . Suddenly, and in the midst of the people there appeared a man of a very venerable aspect, and different from the inhabitants in his apparel, who took the command, arranged, and ordered them in the best military

manner, and under his direction they repelled and routed the Indians, and the town was saved. He immediately vanished, and the inhabitants could not account for the phenomenon, but by considering that person as an Angel sent of God upon that special occasion for their deliverance. . . . The mystery was unriddled after the revolution [the Bloodless Revolution of 1688], when it became not so very dangerous to have it known that the [Regicide] Judges received an asylum here, and that Goffe [one of the three Regicide judges] was actually in Hadley at that time [pp. 109-110]."

Hawthorne's adaptation of time and place and his change of characters and circumstances to fit an old story to suit his purposes is in some respects like Irving's technique of refurbishing old European folk tales to make Knickerbocker tales of them.

streets of Boston. The sun was near setting when the march commenced.

The roll of the drum at that unquiet crisis seemed to go through the streets, less as the martial music of the soldiers, than as a muster-call to the inhabitants themselves. A multitude, by various avenues, assembled in King Street, which was destined to be the scene, nearly a century afterwards, of another encounter between the troops of Britain and a people struggling against her tyranny. Though more than sixty 10 years had elapsed since the pilgrims came, this crowd of their descendants still showed the strong and sombre features of their character perhaps more strikingly in such a stern emergency than on happier occasions. There were the sober garb, the general severity of mien, the gloomy but undismayed expression, the scriptural forms of speech, and the confidence in Heaven's blessing on a righteous cause, which would have marked a band of the original Puritans, when threatened by some peril of the wilderness. 20 Indeed, it was not yet time for the old spirit to be extinct; since there were men in the street that day who had worshipped there beneath the trees, before a house was reared to the God for whom they had become exiles. Old soldiers of the Parliament were here, too, smiling grimly at the thought that their aged arms might strike another blow against the house of Stuart. Here, also, were the veterans of King Philip's war, who had burned villages and slaughtered young and old, with pious fierceness, while the godly 30 souls throughout the land were helping them with prayer. Several ministers were scattered among the crowd, which, unlike all other mobs, regarded them with such reverence, as if there were sanctity in their very garments. These holy men exerted their influence to quiet the people, but not to disperse them. Meantime, the purpose of the Governor, in disturbing the peace of the town at a period when the slightest commotion might throw the country into a ferment, was almost the universal subject of inquiry, and variously 40 explained.

"Satan will strike his master-stroke presently," cried some, "because he knoweth that his time is short. All our godly pastors are to be dragged to prison! We shall see them at a Smithfield fire in King Street!"

Hereupon the people of each parish gathered closer round their minister, who looked calmly upwards and assumed a more apostolic dignity, as well befitted a candidate for the highest honor of his profession, the

crown of martyrdom. It was actually fancied, at that period, that New England might have a John Rogers of her own to take the place of that worthy in the Primer.

"The Pope of Rome has given orders for a new St. Bartholomew!" cried others. "We are to be massacred, man and male child!"

Neither was this rumor wholly discredited, although the wiser class believed the Governor's object somewhat less atrocious. His predecessor under the old charter, Bradstreet, a venerable companion of the first settlers, was known to be in town. There were grounds for conjecturing, that Sir Edmund Andros intended at once to strike terror by a parade of military force, and to confound the opposite faction by possessing himself of their chief.

"Stand firm for the old charter Governor!" shouted the crowd, seizing upon the idea. "The good old Governor Bradstreet!"

While this cry was at the loudest, the people were surprised by the well-known figure of Governor Bradstreet himself, a patriarch of nearly ninety, who appeared on the elevated steps of a door, and, with characteristic mildness, besought them to submit to the constituted authorities.

"My children," concluded this venerable person, "do nothing rashly. Cry not aloud, but pray for the welfare of New England, and expect patiently what the Lord will do in this matter!"

The event was soon to be decided. All this time, the roll of the drum had been approaching through Cornhill, louder and deeper, till with reverberations from house to house, and the regular tramp of martial footsteps, it burst into the street. A double rank of soldiers made their appearance, occupying the whole breadth of the passage, with shouldered matchlocks, and matches burning, so as to present a row of fires in the dusk. Their steady march was like the progress of a machine, that would roll irresistibly over everything in its way. Next, moving slowly, with a confused clatter of hoofs on the pavement, rode a party of mounted gentlemen, the central figure being Sir Edmund Andros, elderly, but erect and soldier-like. Those around him were his favorite councillors, and the bitterest foes of New England. At his right hand rode Edward Randolph, our arch-enemy, that "blasted wretch," as Cotton Mather calls him, who achieved the downfall of our ancient government, and was followed with a sensible curse, through life

and to his grave. On the other side was Bullivant, scattering jests and mockery as he rode along. Dudley came behind, with a downcast look, dreading, as well he might, to meet the indignant gaze of the people, who beheld him, their only countryman by birth, among the oppressors of his native land. The captain of a frigate in the harbor, and two or three civil officers under the Crown, were also there. But the figure which most attracted the public eye, and stirred up the deepest feeling, was the Episcopal clergyman of King's Chapel, riding haughtily among the magistrates in his priestly vestments, the fitting representative of prelacy and persecution, the union of church and state, and all those abominations which had driven the Puritans to the wilderness. Another guard of soldiers, in double rank, brought up the rear.

The whole scene was a picture of the condition of New England, and its moral, the deformity of any government that does not grow out of the nature of things, and the character of the people. On one side the religious multitude, with their sad visages and dark attire, and on the other, the group of despotic rulers, with the high churchman in the midst, and here and there a crucifix at their bosoms, all magnificently clad, flushed with wine, proud of unjust authority, and scoffing at the universal groan. And the mercenary soldiers, waiting but the word to deluge the street with blood, showed the only means by which obedience could be secured.

"O Lord of Hosts," cried a voice among the crowd, "provide a Champion for thy people!"

This ejaculation was loudly uttered, and served as a herald's cry, to introduce a remarkable personage. The crowd had rolled back, and were now huddled together nearly at the extremity of the street, while the soldiers had advanced no more than a third of its length. The intervening space was empty—a paved solitude, between lofty edifices, which threw almost a twilight shadow over it. Suddenly, there was seen the figure of an ancient man, who seemed to have emerged from among the people, and was walking by himself along the centre of the street, to confront the armed band. He wore the old Puritan dress, a dark cloak and a steeple-crowned hat, in the fashion of at least fifty years before, with a heavy sword upon his thigh, but a staff in his hand to assist the tremulous gait of age.

When at some distance from the multitude, the old man turned slowly round, displaying a face of

antique majesty, rendered doubly venerable by the hoary beard that descended on his breast. He made a gesture at once of encouragement and warning, then turned again, and resumed his way.

"Who is this gray patriarch?" asked the young men of their sires.

"Who is this venerable brother?" asked the old men among themselves.

But none could make reply. The fathers of the people, those of fourscore years and upwards, were disturbed, deeming it strange that they should forget one of such evident authority, whom they must have known in their early days, the associate of Winthrop, and all the old councillors, giving laws, and making prayers, and leading them against the savage. The elderly men ought to have remembered him, too, with locks as gray in their youth, as their own were now. And the young! How could he have passed so utterly from their memories—that hoary sire, the relic of long-departed times, whose awful benediction had surely been bestowed on their uncovered heads, in childhood?

"Whence did he come? What is his purpose? Who can this old man be?" whispered the wondering crowd.

Meanwhile, the venerable stranger, staff in hand, was pursuing his solitary walk along the centre of the street. As he drew near the advancing soldiers, and as the roll of their drum came full upon his ear, the old man raised himself to a loftier mien, while the decrepitude of age seemed to fall from his shoulders, leaving him in gray but unbroken dignity. Now, he marched onward with a warrior's step, keeping time to the military music. Thus the aged form advanced on one side, and the whole parade of soldiers and magistrates on the other, till, when scarcely twenty yards remained between, the old man grasped his staff by the middle, and held it before him like a leader's truncheon.

"Stand!" cried he.

The eye, the face, and attitude of command; the solemn, yet warlike peal of that voice, fit either to rule a host in the battlefield or be raised to God in prayer, were irresistible. At the old man's word and outstretched arm, the roll of the drum was hushed at once, and the advancing line stood still. A tremulous enthusiasm seized upon the multitude. That stately form, combining the leader and the saint, so gray, so dimly seen, in such an ancient garb, could only

belong to some old champion of the righteous cause, whom the oppressor's drum had summoned from his grave. They raised a shout of awe and exultation, and looked for the deliverance of New England.

The Governor, and the gentlemen of his party, perceiving themselves brought to an unexpected stand, rode hastily forward, as if they would have pressed their snorting and affrighted horses right against the hoary apparition. He, however, blenched not a step, but glancing his severe eye round the group, which <sup>10</sup> half encompassed him, at last bent it sternly on Sir Edmund Andros. One would have thought that the dark old man was chief ruler there, and that the Governor and Council, with soldiers at their back, representing the whole power and authority of the Crown, had no alternative but obedience.

"What does this old fellow here?" cried Edward Randolph, fiercely. "On, Sir Edmund! Bid the soldiers forward, and give the dotard the same choice that you give all his countrymen—to stand aside or <sup>20</sup> be trampled on!"

"Nay, nay, let us show respect to the good grand sire," said Bullivant, laughing. "See you not, he is some old round-headed dignitary, who hath lain asleep these thirty years, and knows nothing of the change of time? Doubtless, he thinks to put us down with a proclamation in Old Noll's name!"

"Are you mad, old man?" demanded Sir Edmund Andros, in loud and harsh tones. "How dare you stay the march of King James's Governor?"

"I have stayed the march of a King himself, ere now," replied the gray figure, with stern composure. "I am here, Sir Governor, because the cry of an oppressed people hath disturbed me in my secret place; and beseeching this favor earnestly of the Lord, it was vouchsafed me to appear once again on earth, in the good old cause of his saints. And what speak ye of James? There is no longer a Popish tyrant on the throne of England, and by to-morrow noon, his name shall be a byword in this very street, where ye <sup>40</sup> would make it a word of terror. Back, thou that wast a Governor, back! With this night thy power is ended—to-morrow, the prison!—back, lest I foretell the scaffold!"

The people had been drawing nearer and nearer, and drinking in the words of their champion, who spoke in accents long disused, like one unaccustomed to converse, except with the dead of many years ago. But his voice stirred their souls. They confronted the

soldiers, not wholly without arms, and ready to convert the very stones of the street into deadly weapons. Sir Edmund Andros looked at the old man; then he cast his hard and cruel eye over the multitude, and beheld them burning with that lurid wrath, so difficult to kindle or to quench, and again he fixed his gaze on the aged form, which stood obscurely in an open space, where neither friend nor foe had thrust himself. What were his thoughts, he uttered no word <sup>10</sup> which might discover. But whether the oppressor were overawed by the Gray Champion's look, or perceived his peril in the threatening attitude of the people, it is certain that he gave back, and ordered his soldiers to commence a slow and guarded retreat. Before another sunset, the Governor, and all that rode so proudly with him, were prisoners, and long ere it was known that James had abdicated, King William was proclaimed throughout New England.

But where was the Gray Champion? Some reported that, when the troops had gone from King Street, and the people were thronging tumultuously in their rear, Bradstreet, the aged Governor, was seen to embrace a form more aged than his own. Others soberly affirmed, that while they marvelled at the venerable grandeur of his aspect, the old man had faded from their eyes, melting slowly into the hues of twilight, till, where he stood, there was an empty space. But all agreed that the hoary shape was gone. The men of that generation watched for his reappearance, in sunshine and in twilight, but never saw him <sup>30</sup> more, nor knew when his funeral passed, nor where his gravestone was.

And who was the Gray Champion? Perhaps his name might be found in the records of that stern Court of Justice, which passed a sentence, too mighty for the age, but glorious in all after-times, for its humbling lesson to the monarch and its high example to the subject. I have heard, that whenever the descendants of the Puritans are to show the spirit of their sires, the old man appears again. When eighty years had passed, he walked once more in King Street. Five years later, in the twilight of an April morning, he stood on the green, beside the meeting house, at Lexington, where now the obelisk of granite, with a slab of slate inlaid, commemorates the first fallen of the Revolution. And when our fathers were toiling at the breastwork on Bunker's Hill, all through that night the old warrior walked his rounds. Long, long may it be, ere he comes again!

His hour is one of darkness, and adversity, and peril. But should domestic tyranny oppress us, or the invader's step pollute our soil, still may the Gray Champion come, for he is the type of New England's hereditary spirit; and his shadowy march, on the eve of danger, must ever be the pledge, that New England's sons will vindicate their ancestry.

January, 1835

1837

### *The Minister's Black Veil*<sup>33</sup>

#### A PARABLE \*

The sexton stood in the porch of Milford meeting-house, pulling busily at the bell-rope. The old people of the village came stooping along the street. Children, with bright faces, tripped merrily beside their parents, or mimicked a graver gait, in the conscious dignity of their Sunday clothes. Spruce bachelors looked sidelong at the pretty maidens, and fancied that the Sabbath sunshine made them prettier than on week days. When the throng had mostly streamed into the porch, the sexton began to toll the bell, keeping his eye on the Reverend Mr. Hooper's door. The first glimpse of the clergyman's figure was the signal for the bell to cease its summons.

"But what has good Parson Hooper got upon his face?" cried the sexton in astonishment.

All within hearing immediately turned about, and beheld the semblance of Mr. Hooper, pacing slowly to his meditative way towards the meeting-house. With one accord they started, expressing more wonder than if some strange minister were coming to dust the cushions of Mr. Hooper's pulpit.

"Are you sure it is our parson?" inquired Goodman Gray of the sexton.

"Of a certainty it is good Mr. Hooper," replied the sexton. "He was to have exchanged pulpits with Parson Shute, of Westbury; but Parson Shute sent to excuse himself yesterday, being to preach a funeral sermon."

The cause of so much amazement may appear suf-

\* Another clergyman in New England, Mr. Joseph Moody, of York, Maine, who died about eighty years since, made himself remarkable by the same eccentricity that is here related of the Reverend Mr. Hooper. In his case, however, the symbol had a different import. In early life he had accidentally killed a beloved friend, and from that day till the hour of his own death, he hid his face from men.

<sup>33</sup> This was first published in *The Token* in 1836.

ficiently slight Mr. Hooper, a gentlemanly person, of about thirty, though still a bachelor, was dressed with due clerical neatness, as if a careful wife had starched his band, and brushed the weekly dust from his Sunday's garb. There was but one thing remarkable in his appearance. Swathed about his forehead, and hanging down over his face, so low as to be shaken by his breath, Mr. Hooper had on a black veil. On a nearer view it seemed to consist of two folds of crape, which entirely concealed his features, except the mouth and chin, but probably did not intercept his sight, further than to give a darkened aspect to all living and inanimate things. With this gloomy shade before him, good Mr. Hooper walked onward, at a slow and quiet pace, stooping somewhat, and looking on the ground, as is customary with abstracted men, yet nodding kindly to those of his parishioners who still waited on the meeting-house steps. But so wonderstruck were they that his greeting hardly met with a return.

"I can't really feel as if good Mr. Hooper's face was behind that piece of crape," said the sexton.

"I don't like it," muttered an old woman, as she hobbled into the meeting-house. "He has changed himself into something awful, only by hiding his face."

"Our parson has gone mad!" cried Goodman Gray, following him across the threshold.

A rumor of some unaccountable phenomenon had preceded Mr. Hooper into the meeting-house, and set all the congregation astir. Few could refrain from twisting their heads towards the door, many stood upright, and turned directly about; while several little boys clambered upon the seats, and came down again with a terrible racket. There was a general bustle, a rustling of the women's gowns and shuffling of the men's feet, greatly at variance with that hushed repose which should attend the entrance of the minister. But Mr. Hooper appeared not to notice the perturbation of his people. He entered with an almost noiseless step, bent his head mildly to the pews on each side, and bowed as he passed his oldest parishioner, a white-haired great-grandsire, who occupied an arm-chair in the centre of the aisle. It was strange to observe how slowly this venerable man became conscious of something singular in the appearance of his pastor. He seemed not fully to partake of the prevailing wonder, till Mr. Hooper had ascended the stairs, and showed himself in the pulpit, face to face with his congregation, except for the

black veil. That mysterious emblem was never once withdrawn. It shook with his measured breath, as he gave out the psalm, it threw its obscurity between him and the holy page, as he read the Scriptures, and while he prayed, the veil lay heavily on his uplifted countenance. Did he seek to hide it from the dead? Being whom he was addressing?

Such was the effect of this simple piece of crape, that more than one woman of delicate nerves was forced to leave the meeting-house. Yet perhaps the pale-faced congregation was almost as fearful a sight to the minister, as his black veil to them.

Mr. Hooper had the reputation of a good preacher, but not an encyclical one: he strove to win his people heavenward by mild, persuasive influences, rather than to drive them thither by the thunders of the Word. The sermon which he now delivered was marked by the same characteristics of style and manner as the general series of his pulpit oratory. But there was something, either in the sentiment of the discourse itself, or in the imagination of the auditors, which made it greatly the most powerful effort that they had ever heard from their pastor's lips. It was tinged, rather more darkly than usual, with the gentle gloom of Mr. Hooper's temperament. The subject had reference to secret sin, and those sad mysteries which we hide from our nearest and dearest, and would fain conceal from our own consciousness, even forgetting that the Omniscient can detect them. A subtle power was breathed into his words. Each member of the congregation, the most innocent girl, and the man of hardened breast, felt as if the preacher had crept upon them, behind his awful veil, and discovered their hoarded iniquity of deed or thought. Many spread their clasped hands on their bosoms. There was nothing terrible in what Mr. Hooper said, at least, no violence; and yet, with every ticmor of his melancholy voice, the hearers quaked. An unsought pathos came hand in hand with awe. So sensible were the audience of some unwonted attribute in their minister, that they longed for a breath of wind to blow aside the veil, almost believing that a stranger's visage would be discovered, though the form, gesture, and voice were those of Mr. Hooper.

At the close of the services, the people hurried out with indecorous confusion, eager to communicate their pent-up amazement, and conscious of lighter spirits the moment they lost sight of the black veil. Some gathered in little circles, huddled closely to-

gether, with their mouths all whispering in the centre; some went homeward alone, wrapt in silent meditation, some talked loudly, and profaned the Sabbath day with ostentatious laughter. A few shook their sagacious heads, intimating that they could penetrate the mystery, while one or two affirmed that there was no mystery at all, but only that Mr. Hooper's eyes were so weakened by the midnight lamp, as to require a shade. After a brief interval, forth came good Mr. Hooper also, in the rear of his flock. Turning his veiled face from one group to another, he paid due reverence to the hoary heads, saluted the middle aged with kind dignity as their friend and spiritual guide, greeted the young with mingled authority and love, and laid his hands on the little children's heads to bless them. Such was always his custom on the Sabbath day. Strange and bewildered looks repaid him for his courtesy. None, as on former occasions, aspired to the honor of walking by their pastor's side. Old Squire Saunders, doubtless by an accidental lapse of memory, neglected to invite Mr. Hooper to his table, where the good clergyman had been wont to bless the food, almost every Sunday since his settlement. He returned, therefore, to the parsonage, and, at the moment of closing the door, was observed to look back upon the people, all of whom had their eyes fixed upon the minister. A sad smile gleamed faintly from beneath the black veil, and flickered about his mouth, glimmering as he disappeared.

"How strange," said a lady, "that a simple black veil, such as any woman might wear on her bonnet, should become such a terrible thing on Mr. Hooper's face!"

"Something must surely be amiss with Mr. Hooper's intellects," observed her husband, the physician of the village. "But the strangest part of the affair is the effect of this vagary, even on a sober-minded man like myself. The black veil, though it covers only our pastor's face, throws its influence over his whole person, and makes him ghostlike from head to foot. Do you not feel it so?"

"Truly do I," replied the lady; "and I would not be alone with him for the world. I wonder he is not afraid to be alone with himself!"

"Men sometimes are so," said her husband.

The afternoon service was attended with similar circumstances. At its conclusion, the bell tolled for the funeral of a young lady. The relatives and friends were assembled in the house, and the more distant

acquaintances stood about the door, speaking of the good qualities of the deceased, when their talk was interrupted by the appearance of Mr. Hooper, still covered with his black veil. It was now an appropriate emblem. The clergyman stepped into the room where the corpse was laid, and bent over the coffin, to take a last farewell of his deceased parishioner. As he stooped, the veil hung straight down from his forehead, so that, if her eyelids had not been closed forever, the dead maiden might have seen his face.<sup>10</sup> Could Mr. Hooper be fearful of her glance, that he so hastily caught back the black veil? A person who watched the interview between the dead and living, scrupled not to affirm, that, at the instant when the clergyman's features were disclosed, the corpse had slightly shuddered, rustling the shroud and muslin cap, though the countenance retained the composure of death. A superstitious old woman was the only witness to this prodigy. From the coffin Mr. Hooper passed into the chamber of the mourners, and thence<sup>20</sup> to the head of the staircase, to make the funeral prayer. It was a tender and heart-dissolving prayer, full of sorrow, yet so imbued with celestial hopes, that the music of a heavenly harp, swept by the fingers of the dead, seemed faintly to be heard among the saddest accents of the minister. The people trembled, though they but darkly understood him when he prayed that they, and himself, and all of mortal race, might be ready, as he trusted this young maiden had been, for the dreadful hour that should snatch the<sup>30</sup> veil from their faces. The bearers went heavily forth, and the mourners followed, saddening all the street, with the dead before them, and Mr. Hooper in his black veil behind.

"Why do you look back?" said one in the procession to his partner.

"I had a fancy," replied she, "that the minister and the maiden's spirit were walking hand in hand."

"And so had I, at the same moment," said the other.

That night, the handsomest couple in Milford village were to be joined in wedlock. Though reckoned a melancholy man, Mr. Hooper had a placid cheerfulness for such occasions, which often excited a sympathetic smile where livelier merriment would have been thrown away. There was no quality of his disposition which made him more beloved than this. The company at the wedding awaited his arrival with impatience, trusting that the strange awe, which had

gathered over him throughout the day, would now be dispelled. But such was not the result. When Mr. Hooper came, the first thing that their eyes rested on was the same horrible black veil, which had added deeper gloom to the funeral, and could portend nothing but evil to the wedding. Such was its immediate effect on the guests that a cloud seemed to have rolled duskily from beneath the black crape, and dimmed the light of the candles. The bridal pair stood up before the minister. But the bride's cold fingers quivered in the tremulous hand of the bridegroom, and her deathlike paleness caused a whisper that the maiden who had been buried a few hours before was come from her grave to be married. If ever another wedding were so dismal, it was that famous one where they tolled the wedding knell.<sup>34</sup> After performing the ceremony, Mr. Hooper raised a glass of wine to his lips, wishing happiness to the new-married couple in a strain of mild pleasantry that ought to have brightened the features of the guests, like a cheerful gleam from the hearth. At that instant, catching a glimpse of his figure in the looking-glass, the black veil involved his own spirit in the horror with which it overwhelmed all others. His frame shuddered, his lips grew white, he spilt the untasted wine upon the carpet, and rushed forth into the darkness. For the Earth, too, had on her Black Veil.

The next day, the whole village of Milford talked of little else than Parson Hooper's black veil. That, and the mystery concealed behind it, supplied a topic for discussion between acquaintances meeting in the street, and good women gossiping at their open windows. It was the first item of news that the tavern-keeper told to his guests. The children babbled of it on their way to school. One imitative little imp covered his face with an old black handkerchief, thereby so affrighting his playmates that the panic seized himself, and he well-nigh lost his wits by his own wag-gery.

<sup>40</sup> It was remarkable that of all the busybodies and impertinent people in the parish, not one ventured to put the plain question to Mr. Hooper, wherefore he did this thing. Hitherto, whenever there appeared the slightest call for such interference, he had never lacked advisers, nor shown himself averse to be guided by their judgment. If he erred at all, it was by so

<sup>34</sup> An allusion to "The Wedding Knell," another of Hawthorne's stories which appeared in the same number of *The Token* with "The Minister's Black Veil."



painful a degree of self-distrust, that even the mildest censure would lead him to consider an indifferent action as a crime. Yet, though so well acquainted with this amiable weakness, no individual among his parishioners chose to make the black veil a subject of friendly remonstrance. There was a feeling of dread, neither plainly confessed nor carefully concealed, which caused each to shift the responsibility upon another, till at length it was found expedient to send a deputation of the church, in order to deal with Mr. Hooper about the mystery, before it should grow into a scandal. Never did an embassy so ill discharge its duties. The minister received them with friendly courtesy, but became silent, after they were seated, leaving to his visitors the whole burden of introducing their important business. The topic, it might be supposed, was obvious enough. There was the black veil swathed round Mr. Hooper's forehead, and concealing every feature above his placid mouth, on which, at times, they could perceive the glimmering of a melancholy smile. But that piece of crape, to their imagination, seemed to hang down before his heart, the symbol of a fearful secret between him and them. Were the veil but cast aside, they might speak freely of it, but not till then. Thus they sat a considerable time, speechless, confused, and shrinking uneasily from Mr. Hooper's eye, which they felt to be fixed upon them with an invisible glance. Finally, the deputies returned abashed to their constituents, pronouncing the matter too weighty to be handled, except by a council of the churches, if indeed, it might not require a general synod.

But there was one person in the village unappalled by the awe with which the black veil had impressed all beside herself. When the deputies returned without an explanation, or even venturing to demand one, she, with the calm energy of her character, determined to chase away the strange cloud that appeared to be settling round Mr. Hooper, every moment more darkly than before. As his plighted wife, it should be her privilege to know what the black veil concealed. At the minister's first visit, therefore, she entered upon the subject with a direct simplicity, which made the task easier both for him and her. After he had seated himself, she fixed her eyes steadfastly upon the veil, but could discern nothing of the dreadful gloom that had so overawed the multitude—it was but a double fold of crape, hanging down from his forehead to his mouth, and slightly stirring with his breath.

"No," said she aloud, and smiling, "there is nothing terrible in this piece of crape, except that it hides a face which I am always glad to look upon. Come, good sir, let the sun shine from behind the cloud. First lay aside your black veil: then tell me why you put it on."

Mr. Hooper's smile glimmered faintly.

"There is an hour to come," said he, "when all of us shall cast aside our veils. Take it not amiss, beloved friend, if I wear this piece of crape till then."

"Your words are a mystery, too," returned the young lady. "Take away the veil from them, at least."

"Elizabeth, I will," said he, "so far as my vow may suffer me. Know, then, this veil is a type and a symbol, and I am bound to wear it ever, both in light and darkness, in solitude and before the gaze of multitudes, and as with strangers, so with my familiar friends. No mortal eye will see it withdrawn. This dismal shade must separate me from the world: even you, Elizabeth, can never come behind it!"

"What grievous affliction hath befallen you," she earnestly inquired, "that you should thus darken your eyes forever?"

"If it be a sign of mourning," replied Mr. Hooper, "I, perhaps, like most other mortals, have sorrows dark enough to be typified by a black veil."

"But what if the world will not believe that it is the type of an innocent sorrow?" urged Elizabeth. "Beloved and respected as you are, there may be whispers that you hide your face under the consciousness of secret sin. For the sake of your holy office, do away this scandal!"

The color rose into her cheeks as she intimated the nature of the rumors that were already abroad in the village. But Mr. Hooper's mildness did not forsake him. He even smiled again—that same sad smile, which always appeared like a faint glimmering of light, proceeding from the obscurity beneath the veil.

"If I hide my face for sorrow, there is cause enough," he merely replied; "and if I cover it for secret sin, what mortal might not do the same?"

And with this gentle, but unconquerable obstinacy did he resist all her entreaties. At length Elizabeth sat silent. For a few moments she appeared lost in thought, considering, probably, what new methods might be tried to withdraw her lover from so dark a fantasy, which, if it had no other meaning, was perhaps a symptom of mental disease. Though of a firmer character than his own, the tears rolled down

her cheeks. But, in an instant, as it were, a new feeling took the place of sorrow: her eyes were fixed insensibly on the black veil, when, like a sudden twilight in the air, its terrors fell around her. She arose, and stood trembling before him.

"And do you feel it then, at last?" said he mournfully.

She made no reply, but covered her eyes with her hand, and turned to leave the room. He rushed forward and caught her arm.

"Have patience with me, Elizabeth!" cried he, passionately. "Do not desert me, though this veil must be between us here on earth. Be mine, and hereafter there shall be no veil over my face, no darkness between our souls! It is but a mortal veil—it is not for eternity! O! you know not how lonely I am, and how frightened, to be alone behind my black veil. Do not leave me in this miserable obscurity forever!"

"Lift the veil but once, and look me in the face," said she.

"Never! It cannot be!" replied Mr. Hooper.

"Then farewell!" said Elizabeth.

She withdrew her arm from his grasp, and slowly departed, pausing at the door, to give one long shuddering gaze, that seemed almost to penetrate the mystery of the black veil. But, even amid his grief, Mr. Hooper smiled to think that only a material emblem had separated him from happiness, though the horrors, which it shadowed forth, must be drawn darkly between the fondest of lovers.

From that time no attempts were made to remove Mr. Hooper's black veil, or, by a direct appeal, to discover the secret which it was supposed to hide. By persons who claimed a superiority to popular prejudice, it was reckoned merely an eccentric whim, such as often mingles with the sober actions of men otherwise rational, and tinges them all with its own semblance of insanity. But with the multitude, good Mr. Hooper was irreparably a bugbear. He could not walk the street with any peace of mind, so conscious was he<sup>40</sup> that the gentle and timid would turn aside to avoid him, and that others would make it a point of hardness to throw themselves in his way. The impertinence of the latter class compelled him to give up his customary walk at sunset to the burial ground, for when he leaned pensively over the gate, there would always be faces behind the gravestones, peeping at his black veil. A fable went the rounds that the stare of the dead people drove him thence. It grieved him, to

the very depth of his kind heart, to observe how the children fled from his approach, breaking up their merriest sports, while his melancholy figure was yet afar off. Their instinctive dread caused him to feel more strongly than aught else, that a preternatural horror was interwoven with the threads of the black crape. In truth, his own antipathy to the veil was known to be so great, that he never willingly passed before a mirror, nor stooped to drink at a still fountain, lest, in its peaceful bosom, he should be affrighted by himself. This was what gave plausibility to the whispers, that Mr. Hooper's conscience tortured him for some great crime too horrible to be entirely concealed, or otherwise than so obscurely intimated. Thus, from beneath the black veil, there rolled a cloud into the sunshine, an ambiguity of sin or sorrow, which enveloped the poor minister, so that love or sympathy could never reach him. It was said that ghost and fiend consorted with him there. With<sup>20</sup> self-shudderings and outward terrors, he walked continually in its shadow, groping darkly within his own soul, or gazing through a medium that saddened the whole world. Even the lawless wind, it was believed, respected his dreadful secret, and never blew aside the veil. But still good Mr. Hooper sadly smiled at the pale visages of the worldly throng as he passed by.

Among all its bad influences, the black veil had the one desirable effect, of making its wearer a very efficient clergyman. By the aid of his mysterious emblem<sup>30</sup>—for there was no other apparent cause—he became a man of awful power over souls that were in agony for sin. His converts always regarded him with a dread peculiar to themselves, affirming, though but figuratively, that, before he brought them to celestial light, they had been with him behind the black veil. Its gloom, indeed, enabled him to sympathize with all dark affections. Dying sinners cried aloud for Mr. Hooper, and would not yield their breath till he appeared, though ever, as he stooped to whisper consolation, they shuddered at the veiled face so near their own. Such were the terrors of the black veil, even when Death had bared his visage! Strangers came long distances to attend service at his church, with the mere idle purpose of gazing at his figure, because it was forbidden them to behold his face. But many were made to quake ere they departed! Once, during Governor Belcher's<sup>35</sup> administration, Mr. Hooper

<sup>35</sup> Jonathan Belcher (1681-1757), royal governor of Massachusetts (1730-41).

was appointed to preach the election sermon,<sup>36</sup> Covered with his black veil, he stood before the chief magistrate, the council, and the representatives, and wrought so deep an impression, that the legislative measures of that year were characterized by all the gloom and piety of our earliest ancestral sway

In this manner Mr. Hooper spent a long life, inaccessible in outward act, yet shrouded in dismal suspicions, kind and loving, though unloved, and dimly feared, a man apart from men, shunned in their health and joy, but ever summoned to their aid in mortal anguish. As years wore on, shedding their snows above his sable veil, he acquired a name throughout the New England churches, and they called him Father Hooper. Nearly all his parishioners, who were of mature age when he was settled, had been borne away by many a funeral. He had one congregation in the church, and a more crowded one in the church-yard; and having wrought so late into the evening, and done his work so well, it was now good 20 Father Hooper's turn to rest.

Several persons were visible by the shaded candle-light, in the death chamber of the old clergyman. Natural connections he had none. But there was the decorously grave, though unmoved physician, seeking only to mitigate the last pangs of the patient whom he could not save. There were the deacons, and other eminently pious members of his church. There, also, was the Reverend Mr. Clark, of Westbury, a young and zealous divine, who had ridden in haste to pray 30 by the bedside of the expiring minister. There was the nurse, no hired handmaiden of death, but one whose calm affection had endured thus long in secrecy, in solitude, amid the chill of age, and would not perish, even at the dying hour. Who, but Elizabeth! And there lay the hoary head of good Father Hooper upon the death pillow, with the black veil still swathed about his brow, and reaching down over his face, so that each more difficult gasp of his faint breath caused it to stir. All through life that 40 piece of crape had hung between him and the world. It had separated him from cheerful brotherhood and woman's love, and kept him in that saddest of all prisons, his own heart; and still it lay upon his face, as if to deepen the gloom of his darksome chamber, and shade him from the sunshine of eternity.

<sup>36</sup> Election sermons were delivered before newly elected officials. To be chosen to deliver the election sermon was always a signal honor.

For some time previous, his mind had been confused, wavering doubtfully between the past and the present, and hovering forward, as it were, at intervals, into the indistinctness of the world to come. There had been feverish turns, which tossed him from side to side, and wore away what little strength he had. But in his most convulsive struggles, and in the wildest vagaries of his intellect, when no other thought retained its sober influence, he still showed an awful solicitude lest the black veil should slip aside. Even if his bewildered soul could have forgotten, there was a faithful woman at his pillow, who, with averted eyes, would have covered that aged face, which she had last beheld in the comeliness of manhood. At length the death-stricken old man lay quietly in the torpor of mental and bodily exhaustion, with an imperceptible pulse, and breath that grew fainter and fainter, except when a long, deep, and irregular inspiration seemed to prelude the flight of his spirit.

The minister of Westbury approached the bedside

"Venerable Father Hooper," said he, "the moment of your release is at hand. Are you ready for the lifting of the veil that shuts in time from eternity?"

Father Hooper at first replied merely by a feeble motion of his head, then, apprehensive, perhaps, that his meaning might be doubtful, he exerted himself to speak.

"Yea," said he, in faint accents, "my soul hath a patient weariness until that veil be lifted."

"And is it fitting," resumed the Reverend Mr. Clark, "that a man so given to prayer, of such a blameless example, holy in deed and thought, so far as mortal judgment may pronounce, is it fitting that a father in the church should leave a shadow on his memory, that may seem to blacken a life so pure? I pray you, my venerable brother, let not this thing be! Suffer us to be gladdened by your triumphant aspect as you go to your reward. Before the veil of eternity be lifted, let me cast aside this black veil from your face!"

And thus speaking, the Reverend Mr. Clark bent forward to reveal the mystery of so many years. But, exerting a sudden energy, that made all the beholders stand aghast, Father Hooper snatched both his hands from beneath the bedclothes, and pressed them strongly on the black veil, resolute to struggle, if the minister of Westbury would contend with a dying man.

"Never!" cried the veiled clergyman. "On earth, never!"

"Dark old man!" exclaimed the affrighted minister, "with what horrible crime upon your soul are you now passing to the judgment?"

Father Hooper's breath heaved, it rattled in his throat, but, with a mighty effort, grasping forward with his hands, he caught hold of life, and held it back till he should speak. He even raised himself in bed, and there he sat, shivering with the arms of <sup>10</sup> death around him, while the black veil hung down, awful, at that last moment, in the gathered terrors of a lifetime. And yet the faint, sad smile, so often there, now seemed to glimmer from its obscurity, and linger on Father Hooper's lips.

"Why do you tremble at me alone?" cried he, turning his veiled face round the circle of pale spectators. "Tremble also at each other! Have men avoided me, and women shown no pity, and children screamed and fled, only for my black veil? What, but the mys- <sup>20</sup> tery which it obscurely typifies, has made this piece of crape so awful? When the friend shows his inmost heart to his friend, the lover to his best beloved, when man does not vainly shrink from the eye of his Creator, loathsomely treasuring up the secret of his sin; then deem me a monster, for the symbol beneath which I have lived, and die! I look around me, and, lo! on every visage a Black Veil!"

While his auditors shrank from one another, in mutual affright, Father Hooper fell back upon his <sup>30</sup> pillow, a veiled corpse, with a faint smile lingering on the lips. Still veiled, they laid him in his coffin, and a veiled corpse they bore him to the grave. The grass of many years has sprung up and withered on that grave, the burial stone is moss-grown, and good Mr. Hooper's face is dust; but awful is still the thought that it mouldered beneath the Black Veil!

1836

1837

### *The Wedding Knell* <sup>37</sup>

There is a certain church in the city of New York which I have always regarded with peculiar interest, on account of a marriage there solemnized, under very singular circumstances, in my grandmother's girlhood. That venerable lady chanced to be a spectator

<sup>37</sup> This story, published in *The Token* in 1836, was probably Hawthorne's nearest approach to the Poesque pattern and was praised by Poe in his review of *Twice-Told Tales* (in *Graham's*

of the scene, and ever after made it her favorite narrative. Whether the edifice now standing on the same site be the identical one to which she referred, I am not antiquarian enough to know, nor would it be worth while to correct myself, perhaps, of an agreeable error, by reading the date of its erection on the tablet over the door. It is a stately church, surrounded by an inclosure of the loveliest green, within which appear urns, pillars, obelisks, and other forms of monumental marble, the tributes of private affection, or more splendid memorials of historic dust. With such a place, though the tumult of the city rolls beneath its tower, one would be willing to connect some legendary interest.

The marriage might be considered as the result of an early engagement, though there had been two intermediate weddings on the lady's part, and forty years of celibacy on that of the gentleman. At sixty-five, Mr. Ellenwood was a shy, but not quite a secluded man, selfish, like all men who brood over their own hearts, yet manifesting on rare occasions a vein of generous sentiment, a scholar throughout life, though always an indolent one, because his studies had no definite object, either of public advantage or personal ambition, a gentleman, high bred and fastidiously delicate, yet sometimes requiring a considerable relaxation, in his behalf, of the common rules of society. In truth, there were so many anomalies in his character, and though shrinking with diseased sensibility from public notice, it had been his fatality so often to become the topic of the day, by some wild eccentricity of conduct, that people searched his lineage for an hereditary taint of insanity. But there was no need of this. His caprices had their origin in a mind that lacked the support of an engrossing purpose, and in feelings that preyed upon themselves for want of other food. If he were mad, it was the consequence, and not the cause, of an aimless and abortive life.

<sup>40</sup> The widow was as complete a contrast to her third bridegroom, in everything but age, as can well be conceived. Compelled to relinquish her first engagement, she had been united to a man of twice her own years, to whom she became an exemplary wife, and by whose death she was left in possession of a splendid fortune. A southern gentleman, considerably younger

*Magazine* for May, 1842, XX, 298-300), as "full of the boldest imagination—an imagination fully controlled by taste." "The most captious critic," Poe thought, "could find no flaw in this production."

than herself, succeeded to her hand, and carried her to Charleston, where, after many uncomfortable years, she found herself again a widow. It would have been singular, if any uncommon delicacy of feeling had survived through such a life as Mrs. Dabney's, it could not but be crushed and killed by her early disappointment, the cold duty of her first marriage, the dislocation of the heart's principles, consequent on a second union, and the unkindness of her southern husband, which had inevitably driven her to connect the idea of his death with that of her comfort. To be brief, she was that wisest, but unloveliest, variety of woman, a philosopher, bearing troubles of the heart with equanimity, dispensing with all that should have been her happiness, and making the best of what remained. Sage in most matters, the widow was perhaps the more amiable for the one frailty that made her ridiculous. Being childless, she could not remain beautiful by proxy, in the person of a daughter, she therefore refused to grow old and ugly, on any consideration, she struggled with Time, and held fast her roses in spite of him, till the venerable thief appeared to have relinquished the spoil, as not worth the trouble of acquiring it.

The approaching marriage of this woman of the world with such an unworldly man as Mr. Ellenwood was announced soon after Mrs. Dabney's return to her native city. Superficial observers, and deeper ones, seemed to concur in supposing that the lady must have borne no inactive part in arranging the affair, there were considerations of expediency which she would be far more likely to appreciate than Mr. Ellenwood; and there was just the specious phantom of sentiment and romance in this late union of two early lovers which sometimes makes a fool of a woman who has lost her true feelings among the accidents of life. All the wonder was, how the gentleman, with his lack of worldly wisdom and agonizing consciousness of ridicule, could have been induced to take a measure at once so prudent and so laughable. But while people talked the wedding-day arrived. The ceremony was to be solemnized according to the Episcopalian forms, and in open church, with a degree of publicity that attracted many spectators, who occupied the front seats of the galleries, and the pews near the altar and along the broad aisle. It had been arranged, or possibly it was the custom of the day, that the parties should proceed separately to church. By some accident the bridegroom was a little

less punctual than the widow and her bridal attendants, with whose arrival, after this tedious, but necessary preface, the action of our tale may be said to commence.

The clumsy wheels of several old-fashioned coaches were heard, and the gentlemen and ladies composing the bridal party came through the church door with the sudden and gladsome effect of a burst of sunshine. The whole group, except the principal figure, was made up of youth and gayety. As they streamed up the broad aisle, while the pews and pillars seemed to brighten on either side, their steps were as buoyant as if they mistook the church for a ball-room, and were ready to dance hand in hand to the altar. So brilliant was the spectacle that few took notice of a singular phenomenon that had marked its entrance. At the moment when the bride's foot touched the threshold the bell swung heavily in the tower above her, and sent forth its deepest knell. The vibrations died away and returned with prolonged solemnity, as she entered the body of the church.

"Good heavens! what an omen," whispered a young lady to her lover.

"On my honor," replied the gentleman, "I believe the bell has the good taste to toll of its own accord. What has she to do with weddings? If you, dearest Julia, were approaching the altar the bell would ring out its merriest peal. It has only a funeral knell for her."

The bride and most of her company had been too much occupied with the bustle of entrance to hear the first boding stroke of the bell, or at least to reflect on the singularity of such a welcome to the altar. They therefore continued to advance with undiminished gayety. The gorgeous dresses of the time, the crimson velvet coats, the gold-laced hats, the hoop petticoats, the silk, satin, brocade, and embroidery, the buckles, canes, and swords, all displayed to the best advantage on persons suited to such finery, made the group appear more like a bright-colored picture than anything real. But by what perversity of taste had the artist represented his principal figure as so wrinkled and decayed, while yet he had decked her out in the brightest splendor of attire, as if the loveliest maiden had suddenly withered into age, and become a moral to the beautiful around her! On they went, however, and had glittered along about a third of the aisle, when another stroke of the bell seemed to fill the church with a visible gloom, dimming and

obscuring the bright pageant, till it shone forth again as from a mist

This time the party wavered, stopped, and huddled closer together, while a slight scream was heard from some of the ladies, and a confused whispering among the gentlemen. Thus tossing to and fro, they might have been fancifully compared to a splendid bunch of flowers, suddenly shaken by a puff of wind, which threatened to scatter the leaves of an old, brown, withered rose, on the same stalk with two dewy buds, 10 —such being the emblem of the widow between her fair young bridesmaids. But her heroism was admirable. She had started with an irrepressible shudder, as if the stroke of the bell had fallen directly on her heart, then, recovering herself, while her attendants were yet in dismay, she took the lead, and paced calmly up the aisle. The bell continued to swing, strike, and vibrate, with the same doleful regularity as when a corpse is on its way to the tomb.

"My young friends here have their nerves a little 20 shaken," said the widow, with a smile, to the clergyman at the altar. "But so many weddings have been ushered in with the merriest peal of the bells, and yet turned out unhappily, that I shall hope for better fortune under such different auspices."

"Madam," answered the rector, in great perplexity, "this strange occurrence brings to my mind a marriage sermon of the famous Bishop Taylor, wherein he mingles so many thoughts of mortality and future woe, that, to speak somewhat after his own rich style, 30 he seems to hang the bridal chamber in black, and cut the wedding garment out of a coffin pall. And it has been the custom of divers nations to infuse something of sadness into their marriage ceremonies, so to keep death in mind while contracting that engagement which is life's chiefest business. Thus we may draw a sad but profitable moral from this funeral knell."

But, though the clergyman might have given his moral even a keener point, he did not fail to dispatch 40 an attendant to inquire into the mystery, and stop those sounds, so dismally appropriate to such a marriage. A brief space elapsed, during which the silence was broken only by whispers, and a few suppressed titterings, among the wedding party and the spectators, who, after the first shock, were disposed to draw an ill-natured merriment from the affair. The young have less charity for aged follies than the old for those of youth. The widow's glance was observed to

wander, for an instant, towards a window of the church, as if searching for the time-worn marble that she had dedicated to her first husband, then her eyelids dropped over their faded orbs, and her thoughts were drawn irresistibly to another grave. Two buried men, with a voice at her ear, and a cry afar off, were calling her to lie down beside them. Perhaps, with momentary truth of feeling, she thought how much happier had been her fate, if, after years of bliss, the bell were now tolling for her funeral, and she were followed to the grave by the old affection of her earliest lover, long her husband. But why had she returned to him, when their cold hearts shrank from each other's embrace?

Still the death-bell tolled so mournfully, that the sunshine seemed to fade in the air. A whisper, communicated from those who stood nearest the windows, now spread through the church, a hearse, with a train of several coaches, was creeping along the street, conveying some dead man to the churchyard, while the bride awaited a living one at the altar. Immediately after, the footsteps of the bridegroom and his friends were heard at the door. The widow looked down the aisle, and clinched the arm of one of her bridesmaids in her bony hand with such unconscious violence, that the fair girl trembled.

"You frighten me, my dear madam!" cried she. "For Heaven's sake, what is the matter?"

"Nothing, my dear, nothing," said the widow; then, whispering close to her ear, "There is a foolish fancy that I cannot get rid of. I am expecting my bridegroom to come into the church, with my first two husbands for groomsmen!"

"Look, look!" screamed the bridemaid. "What is here? The funeral!"

As she spoke, a dark procession paced into the church. First came an old man and woman, like chief mourners at a funeral, attired from head to foot in the deepest black, all but their pale features and hoary hair, he leaning on a staff, and supporting her decrepit form with his nerveless arm. Behind appeared another, and another pair, as aged, as black, and mournful as the first. As they drew near, the widow recognized in every face some trait of former friends, long forgotten, but now returning, as if from their old graves, to warn her to prepare a shroud; or, with purpose almost as unwelcome, to exhibit their wrinkles and infirmity, and claim her as their companion by the tokens of her own decay. Many a merry

night had she danced with them, in youth. And now, in joyless age, she felt that some withered partner should request her hand, and all unite, in a dance of death, to the music of the funeral bell.

While these aged mourners were passing up the aisle, it was observed that, from pew to pew, the spectators shuddered with irrepressible awe, as some object, hitherto concealed by the intervening figures, came full in sight. Many turned away their faces, others kept a fixed and rigid stare, and a young girl giggled hysterically, and fainted with the laughter on her lips. When the spectral procession approached the altar, each couple separated, and slowly diverged, till, in the centre, appeared a form, that had been worthily ushered in with all this gloomy pomp, the death knell, and the funeral. It was the bridegroom in his shroud!

No garb but that of the grave could have befitted such a deathlike aspect, the eyes, indeed, had the wild gleam of a sepulchral lamp, all else was fixed in the stern calmness which old men wear in the coffin. The corpse stood motionless, but addressed the widow in accents that seemed to melt into the clang of the bell, which fell heavily on the air while he spoke.

"Come, my bride!" said those pale lips, "the hearse is ready. The sexton stands waiting for us at the door of the tomb. Let us be married; and then to our coffins!"

How shall the widow's horror be represented? It gave her the ghastliness of a dead man's bride. Her youthful friends stood apart, shuddering at the mourners, the shrouded bridegroom, and herself, the whole scene expressed, by the strongest imagery, the vain struggle of the gilded vanities of this world, when opposed to age, infirmity, sorrow, and death. The awe-struck silence was first broken by the clergyman.

"Mr. Ellenwood," said he, soothingly, yet with somewhat of authority, "you are not well. Your mind has been agitated by the unusual circumstances in which you are placed. The ceremony must be deferred. As an old friend, let me entreat you to return home."

"Home! yes, but not without my bride," answered he, in the same hollow accents. "You deem this mockery; perhaps madness. Had I bedizened my aged and broken frame with scarlet and embroidery—had I forced my withered lips to smile at my dead heart—that might have been mockery, or madness. But now, let young and old declare, which of us has come

hither without a wedding garment, the bridegroom or the bride!"

He stepped forward at a ghostly pace, and stood beside the widow, contrasting the awful simplicity of his shroud with the glaucous and glitter in which she had arrayed herself for this unhappy scene. None, that beheld them, could deny the terrible strength of the moral which his disordered intellect had contrived to draw.

"Cruel! cruel!" groaned the heart-stucken bride.

"Cruel!" repeated he; then, losing his deathlike composure in a wild bitterness: "Heaven judge which of us has been cruel to the other! In youth you deprived me of my happiness, my hopes, my aims, you took away all the substance of my life, and made it a dream without reality enough even to grieve at—with only a pervading gloom, through which I walked wearily, and cared not whither. But after forty years, when I have built my tomb, and would not give up the thought of resting there—no, not for such a life as we once pictured—you call me to the altar. At your summons I am here. But other husbands have enjoyed your youth, your beauty, your warmth of heart, and all that could be termed your life. What is there for me but your decay and death? And therefore I have bidden these funeral friends, and bespoken the sexton's deepest knell, and am come, in my shroud, to wed you, as with a burial service, that we may join our hands at the door of the sepulchre, and enter it together."

It was not frenzy, it was not merely the drunkenness of strong emotion, in a heart unused to it, that now wrought upon the bride. The stern lesson of the day had done its work, her worldliness was gone. She seized the bridegroom's hand.

"Yes!" cried she. "Let us wed, even at the door of the sepulchre! My life is gone in vanity and emptiness. But at its close there is one true feeling. It has made me what I was in youth; it makes me worthy of you. Time is no more for both of us. Let us wed for Eternity!"

With a long and deep regard, the bridegroom looked into her eyes, while a tear was gathering in his own. How strange that gush of human feeling from the frozen bosom of a corpse! He wiped away the tears even with his shroud.

"Beloved of my youth," said he, "I have been wild. The despair of my whole lifetime had returned at once, and maddened me. Forgive; and be forgiven."

Yes, it is evening with us now, and we have realized none of our morning dreams of happiness. But let us join our hands before the altar, as lovers whom adverse circumstances have separated through life, yet who meet again as they are leaving it, and find their earthly affection changed into something holy as religion. And what is Time, to the married of Eternity?"

Amid the tears of many, and a swell of exalted sentiment, in those who felt aright, was solemnized the union of two immortal souls. The train of withered mourners, the hoary bridegroom in his shroud, the pale features of the aged bride, and the death-bell tolling through the whole, till its deep voice overpowered the marriage words, all marked the funeral of earthly hopes. But as the ceremony proceeded, the organ, as if stirred by the sympathies of this impressive scene, poured forth an anthem, first mingling with the dismal knell, then rising to a loftier strain, till the soul looked down upon its woe. And when the awful rite was finished, and with cold hand in cold hand, the Married of Eternity withdrew, the organ's peal of solemn triumph drowned the Wedding Knell.

1836

1837

### *Fancy's Show Box*<sup>38</sup>

#### A MORALITY

What is Guilt? A stain upon the soul. And it is a point of vast interest whether the soul may contract such stains, in all their depth and flagrancy, from deeds which may have been plotted and resolved upon, but which, physically, have never had existence. Must the fleshly hand and visible frame of man set its seal to the evil designs of the soul, in order to give them their entire validity against the sinner? Or, while none but crimes perpetrated are cognizable before an earthly tribunal, will guilty thoughts—of which guilty deeds are no more than shadows—will these draw down the full weight of a condemning sentence, in the supreme court of eternity? In the solitude of a midnight chamber or in a desert, afar from men or in a church, while the body is kneeling,

<sup>38</sup> This story was published in *The Token* in 1837. Hawthorne's son Julian believed it to have been occasioned by his father's remorse "because the duel which he was ready to fight encouraged his friend [Jonathan] Cilley to engage in one which ended disastrously." However, the story was written not later

than 1836, whereas Cilley's death did not occur until 1838. The immediate source appears in Hawthorne's notation in his journal "There is evil in every human heart, which may remain latent, perhaps, through the whole of life" (*American Note-Books*, p. 43). The theme of natural depravity is also handled elsewhere by Hawthorne. See, for example, "Earth's Holocaust."

the soul may pollute itself even with those crimes which we are accustomed to deem altogether carnal. If this be true, it is a fearful truth.

Let us illustrate the subject by an imaginary example. A venerable gentleman, one Mr. Smith, who had long been regarded as a pattern of moral excellence, was warming his aged blood with a glass or two of generous wine. His children being gone forth about their worldly business, and his grandchildren at school, he sat alone, in a deep, luxurious arm-chair, with his feet beneath a richly-carved mahogany table. Some old people have a dread of solitude, and when better company may not be had, rejoice even to hear the quiet breathing of a babe, asleep upon the carpet. But Mr. Smith, whose silver hair was the bright symbol of a life unstained, except by such spots as are inseparable from human nature, had no need of a babe to protect him by its purity, nor of a grown person to stand between him and his own soul. Nevertheless, either Manhood must converge with Age, or Womanhood must soothe him with gentle cares, or Infancy must sport around his chair, or his thoughts will stray into the misty region of the past, and the old man be chill and sad. Wine will not always cheer him. Such might have been the case with Mr. Smith, when, through the brilliant medium of his glass of old Madeira, he beheld three figures entering the room. These were Fancy, who had assumed the garb and aspect of an itinerant showman, with a box of pictures on her back, and Memory, in the likeness of a clerk, with a pen behind her ear, an inkhorn at her buttonhole, and a huge manuscript volume beneath her arm; and lastly, behind the other two, a person shrouded in a dusky mantle, which concealed both face and form. But Mr. Smith had a shrewd idea that it was Conscience.

How kind of Fancy, Memory, and Conscience to visit the old gentleman, just as he was beginning to imagine that the wine had neither so bright a sparkle nor so excellent a flavor as when himself and the liquor were less aged! Through the dim length of the apartment, where crimson curtains muffled the glare of sunshine and created a rich obscurity, the three guests drew near the silver-haired old man. Memory,

than 1836, whereas Cilley's death did not occur until 1838. The immediate source appears in Hawthorne's notation in his journal "There is evil in every human heart, which may remain latent, perhaps, through the whole of life" (*American Note-Books*, p. 43). The theme of natural depravity is also handled elsewhere by Hawthorne. See, for example, "Earth's Holocaust."



with a finger between the leaves of her huge volume, placed herself at his right hand. Conscience, with her face still hidden in the dusky mantle, took her station on the left, so as to be next his heart, while Fancy set down her picture box upon the table, with the magnifying glass convenient to his eye. We can sketch merely the outlines of two or three out of the many pictures which, at the pulling of a string, successively peopled the box with the semblances of living scenes

One was a moonlight picture: in the background, a lowly dwelling; and in front, partly shadowed by a tree, yet besprinkled with flakes of radiance, two youthful figures, male and female. The young man stood with folded arms, a haughty smile upon his lip, and a gleam of triumph in his eye, as he glanced downward at the kneeling girl. She was almost prostrate at his feet, evidently sinking under a weight of shame and anguish, which hardly allowed her to lift her clasped hands in supplication. Her eyes she could not lift. But neither her agony, nor the lovely features on which it was depicted, nor the slender grace of the form which it convulsed, appeared to soften the obduracy of the young man. He was the personification of triumphant scorn. Now, strange to say, as old Mr. Smith peeped through the magnifying glass, which made the objects start out from the canvas with magical deception, he began to recognize the farm-house, the tree, and both the figures of the picture. The young man, in times long past, had often met his gaze within the looking-glass; the girl was the very image of his first love—his cottage love—his Martha Burroughs! Mr. Smith was scandalized—"O vile and slanderous picture!" he exclaims. "When have I triumphed over ruined innocence? Was not Martha wedded, in her teens, to David Tomkins, who won her girlish love, and long enjoyed her affection as a wife? And ever since his death she has lived a reputable widow!" Meantime, Memory was turning over the leaves of her volume, rustling them to and fro with uncertain fingers, until, among the earlier pages, she found one which had reference to this picture. She reads it, close to the old gentleman's ear; it is a record merely of sinful thought, which never was embodied in an act; but while Memory is reading, Conscience unveils her face, and strikes a dagger to the heart of Mr. Smith. Though not a death-blow, the torture was extreme.

The exhibition proceeded. One after another,

Fancy displayed her pictures, all of which appeared to have been painted by some malicious artist on purpose to vex Mr. Smith. Not a shadow of proof could have been adduced, in any earthly court, that he was guilty of the slightest of those sins which were thus made to stare him in the face. In one scene there was a table set out, with several bottles, and glasses half filled with wine, which threw back the dull ray of an expiring lamp. There had been mirth and revelry, until the hand of the clock stood just at midnight, when murder stepped between the boon companions. A young man had fallen on the floor, and lay stone dead, with a ghastly wound crushed into his temple, while over him, with a delirium of mingled rage and horror in his countenance, stood the youthful likeness of Mr. Smith. The murdered youth wore the features of Edward Spencer! "What does this rascal of a painter mean?" cries Mr. Smith, provoked beyond all patience. "Edward Spencer was my earliest and dearest friend, true to me as I to him, through more than half a century. Neither I, nor any other, ever murdered him. Was he not alive within five years, and did he not, in token of our long friendship, bequeath me his gold-headed cane and a mourning ring?" Again had Memory been turning over her volume, and fixed at length upon so confused a page that she surely must have scribbled it when she was tipsy. The purport was, however, that while Mr. Smith and Edward Spencer were heating their young blood with wine, a quarrel had flashed up between them, and Mr. Smith, in deadly wrath, had flung a bottle at Spencer's head. True, it missed its aim, and merely smashed a looking-glass, and the next morning, when the incident was imperfectly remembered, they had shaken hands with a hearty laugh. Yet, again, while Memory was reading, Conscience unveiled her face, struck a dagger to the heart of Mr. Smith, and quelled his remonstrance with her iron frown. The pain was quite excruciating.

Some of the pictures had been painted with so doubtful a touch, and in colors so faint and pale, that the subjects could barely be conjectured. A dull, semi-transparent mist had been thrown over the surface of the canvas, into which the figures seemed to vanish, while the eye sought most earnestly to fix them. But in every scene, however dubiously portrayed, Mr. Smith was invariably haunted by his own lineaments, at various ages, as in a dusty mirror. After poring several minutes over one of these blurred and

almost indistinguishable pictures, he began to see that the painter had intended to represent him, now in the decline of life, as stripping the clothes from the backs of three half-starved children. "Really, this puzzles me!" quoth Mr. Smith, with the irony of conscious rectitude. "Asking pardon of the painter, I pronounce him a fool, as well as a scandalous knave. A man of my standing in the world to be robbing little children of their clothes! Ridiculous!" But while he spoke, Memory had searched her fatal volume, and found a page, which, with her sad, calm voice, she poured into his ear. It was not altogether inapplicable to the misty scene. It told how Mr. Smith had been grievously tempted by many devilish sophistries, on the ground of a legal quibble, to commence a lawsuit against three orphan children, joint heirs to a considerable estate. Fortunately, before he was quite decided, his claims had turned out nearly as devoid of law as justice. As Memory ceased to read, Conscience again thrust aside her mantle, and would have struck her victim with the envenomed dagger, only that he struggled and clasped his hands before his heart. Even then, however, he sustained an ugly gash.

Why should we follow Fancy through the whole series of those awful pictures? Painted by an artist of wondrous power, and terrible acquaintance with the secret soul, they embodied the ghosts of all the never perpetrated sins that had glided through the lifetime of Mr. Smith. And could such beings of cloudy fantasy, so near akin to nothingness, give valid evidence against him at the day of judgment? Be that the case or not, there is reason to believe that one truly penitential tear would have washed away each hateful picture, and left the canvas white as snow. But Mr. Smith, at a prick of Conscience too keen to be endured, bellowed aloud, with impatient agony, and suddenly discovered that his three guests were gone. There he sat alone, a silver-haired and highly-venicated old man, in the rich gloom of the crimson-curtained room, with no box of pictures on the table, but only a decanter of most excellent Madeira. Yet his heart still seemed to fester with the venom of the dagger.

Nevertheless, the unfortunate old gentleman might have argued the matter with Conscience, and alleged many reasons wherefore she should not smite him so pitilessly. Were we to take up his cause, it should be somewhat in the following fashion. A scheme of guilt, till it be put in execution, greatly resembles a

train of incidents in a projected tale. The latter, in order to produce a sense of reality in the reader's mind, must be conceived with such proportionate strength by the author as to seem, in the glow of fancy, more like truth, past, present, or to come, than purely fiction. The prospective sinner, on the other hand, weaves his plot of crime, but seldom or never feels a perfect certainty that it will be executed. There is a dreaminess diffused about his thoughts, in a dream, as it were, he strikes the death-blow into his victim's heart, and starts to find an indelible blood-stain on his hand. Thus a novel writer or a dramatist, in creating a villain of romance and fitting him with evil deeds, and the villain of actual life, in projecting crimes that will be perpetrated, may almost meet each other half-way between reality and fancy. It is not until the crime is accomplished that guilt clinches its gripe upon the guilty heart, and claims it for its own. Then, and not before, sin is actually felt and acknowledged, and, if unaccompanied by repentance, grows a thousand-fold more virulent by its self-consciousness. Be it considered, also, that men often overestimate their capacity for evil. At a distance, while its attendant circumstances do not press upon their notice, and its results are dimly seen, they can bear to contemplate it. They may take the steps which lead to crime, impelled by the same sort of mental action as in working out a mathematical problem, yet be powerless with compunction at the final moment. They knew not what deed it was that they deemed themselves resolved to do. In truth, there is no such thing in man's nature as a settled and full resolve, either for good or evil, except at the very moment of execution. Let us hope, therefore, that all the dreadful consequences of sin will not be incurred, unless the act have set its seal upon the thought.

Yet, with the slight fancy work which we have framed, some sad and awful truths are interwoven. Man must not disclaim his brotherhood, even with the guiltiest, since, though his hand be clean, his heart has surely been polluted by the flitting phantoms of iniquity. He must feel that, when he shall knock at the gate of heaven, no semblance of an unspotted life can entitle him to entrance there. Penitence must kneel, and Mercy come from the footstool of the throne, or that golden gate will never open!

FROM

*Mosses from an Old Manse**The Birthmark*<sup>39</sup>

In the latter part of the last century there lived a man of science, an eminent proficient in every branch of natural philosophy, who not long before our story opens had made experience of a spiritual affinity more attractive than any chemical one. He had left his laboratory to the care of an assistant, cleared his fine countenance from the furnace smoke, washed the stain of acids from his fingers, and persuaded a beautiful woman to become his wife. In those days when the comparatively recent discovery of electricity and other kindred mysteries of Nature seemed to open paths into the region of miracle, it was not unusual for the love of science to rival the love of woman in its depth and absorbing energy. The higher intellect, the imagination, the spirit, and even the heart might all find their congenial aliment in pursuits which, as some of their ardent votaries believed, would ascend from one step of powerful intelligence to another, until the philosopher should lay his hand on the secret of creative force and perhaps make new worlds for himself. We know not whether Aylmer possessed this degree of faith in man's ultimate control over Nature. He had devoted himself, however, too unreservedly to scientific studies ever to be weaned from them by any second passion. His love for his young

wife might prove the stronger of the two, but it could only be by intertwining itself with his love of science, and uniting the strength of the latter to his own

Such a union accordingly took place, and was attended with truly remarkable consequences and a deeply impressive moral. One day, very soon after their marriage, Aylmer sat gazing at his wife with a trouble in his countenance that grew stronger until he spoke.

"Georgiana," said he, "has it never occurred to you that the mark upon your cheek might be removed?"

"No, indeed," said she, smiling; but perceiving the seriousness of his manner, she blushed deeply. "To tell you the truth it has been so often called a charm that I was simple enough to imagine it might be so."

"Ah, upon another face perhaps it might," replied her husband, "but never on yours. No, dearest Georgiana, you came so nearly perfect from the hand of Nature that this slightest possible defect, which we hesitate whether to term a defect or a beauty, shocks me, as being the visible mark of earthly imperfection."

"Shocks you, my husband?" cried Georgiana, deeply hurt; at first reddening with momentary anger, but then bursting into tears. "Then why did you take me from my mother's side? You cannot love what shocks you!"

To explain this conversation it must be mentioned that in the centre of Georgiana's left cheek there was

<sup>39</sup> Hawthorne's interest in the complicated moral problem presented in "The Birthmark," which was published in *The Pioneer* in March, 1843, is observable in two entries in his *American Note-Books*: (1) "A person to be in possession of something as perfect as mortal man has a right to demand, he tries to make it better, and ruins it entirely" (p. 106); (2) "A person to be the death of his beloved in trying to raise her to more than mortal perfection, yet this should be a comfort to him for having aimed so highly and holily" (p. 210).

These two ideas present implications that point to a contradiction which Hawthorne found hard to reconcile—the dilemma in which man finds himself between the divinely inspired desire for perfection of his soul and the human impossibility of attaining it. Emerson could speak with a degree of philosophic detachment of "man as a god in ruins . . . a divine impossibility." Hawthorne, like Melville, was profoundly troubled by this ambiguity, and found in it one of the many imponderable and insoluble riddles that led him to "gird away at the nut of the universe" with ever-mounting puzzlement. The result is that "The Birthmark" comes to no clear-cut conclusion. Like *The Scarlet Letter* and *The Marble Faun*, as well as several of his short stories, "The Birthmark" ends without what is called a proper conclusion; instead, the reader is left to make his own interpretation and evaluation.

However, when the story is read in conjunction with "Rappaccini's Daughter" and "Ethan Brand," in each of which a man seeks after perfection—though of different kinds and by different means—the tendency of Hawthorne's thinking on human capability becomes clearer. Rappaccini's love of science, allowed to dominate him, destroys his love of humankind; he becomes a monster, ready to sacrifice even his daughter in his pursuit of the purely intellectual. In Ethan Brand, the lust for knowledge leads to a loss of love and reverence for humanity and a destruction within him of his own human qualities. Both illustrate the evils that accrue to the man who allows one part of his nature to dominate all others—thus destroying that delicate balance by which men are rendered human. Tragedy in a great number of Hawthorne's characters results from the destruction or loss of the truly balanced human nature—with heart and head equitably poised. In some instances it is isolation that produces the unbalanced character; in others it is an inordinate love or hate of something that comes to dominate the character with monomaniac insistence; in some an over-weening pride results in tragic consequences; in still others crime or evil are the destructive agencies. In all alike there is a drying-up of human sympathies or an overthrow of a well-rounded, balanced, poised human nature.

a singular mark, deeply interwoven, as it were, with the texture and substance of her face. In the usual state of her complexion—a healthy though delicate bloom—the mark wore a tint of deeper crimson, which imperfectly defined its shape amid the surrounding rosiness. When she blushed it gradually became more indistinct, and finally vanished amid the triumphant rush of blood that bathed the whole cheek with its brilliant glow. But if any shifting motion caused her to turn pale there was the mark again, a crimson stain upon the snow, in what Aylmer sometimes deemed an almost fearful distinctness. Its shape bore not a little similarity to the human hand, though of the smallest pygmy size. Georgiana's lovers were wont to say that some fairy at her birth hour had laid her tiny hand upon the infant's cheek, and left this impress there in token of the magic endowments that were to give her such sway over all hearts. Many a desperate swain would have risked life for the privilege of pressing his lips to the mysterious hand. It must not be concealed, however, that the impression wrought by this fairy sign manual varied exceedingly, according to the difference of temperament in the beholders. Some fastidious persons—but they were exclusively of her own sex—affirmed that the bloody hand, as they chose to call it, quite destroyed the effect of Georgiana's beauty, and rendered her countenance even hideous. But it would be as reasonable to say that one of those small blue stains which sometimes occur in the purest statuary marble would convert the Eve of Powers to a monster. Masculine observers, if the birthmark did not heighten their admiration, contented themselves with wishing it away, that the world might possess one living specimen of ideal loveliness without the semblance of a flaw. After his marriage,—for he thought little or nothing of the matter before,—Aylmer discovered that this was the case with himself.

Had she been less beautiful,—if Envy's self could have found aught else to sneer at,—he might have felt his affection heightened by the prettiness of this mimic hand, now vaguely portrayed, now lost, now stealing forth again and glimmering to and fro with every pulse of emotion that throbbed within her heart; but seeing her otherwise so perfect, he found this one defect grow more and more intolerable with every moment of their united lives. It was the fatal flaw of humanity which Nature, in one shape or another, stamps ineffaceably on all her productions,

either to imply that they are temporary and finite, or that their perfection must be wrought by toil and pain. The crimson hand expressed the ineludible grip of mortality clutches the highest and purest of earthly mould, degrading them into kindred with the lowest, and even with the very brutes, like whom their visible frames return to dust. In this manner, selecting it as the symbol of his wife's liability to sin, sorrow, decay, and death, Aylmer's sombre imagination was not long in rendering the birthmark a frightful object, causing him more trouble and horror than ever Georgiana's beauty, whether of soul or sense, had given him delight.

At all the seasons which should have been their happiest, he invariably and without intending it, nay, in spite of a purpose to the contrary, reverted to this one disastrous topic. Trifling as it at first appeared, it so connected itself with innumerable trains of thought and modes of feeling that it became the central point of all. With the morning twilight Aylmer opened his eyes upon his wife's face and recognized the symbol of imperfection, and when they sat together at the evening hearth his eyes wandered stealthily to her cheek, and beheld, flickering with the blaze of the wood fire, the spectral hand that wrote mortality where he would fain have worshipped. Georgiana soon learned to shudder at his gaze. It needed but a glance with the peculiar expression that his face often wore to change the roses of her cheek into a deathlike paleness, amid which the crimson hand was brought strongly out, like a bas-relief of ruby on the whitest marble.

Late one night when the lights were growing dim, so as hardly to betray the stain on the poor wife's cheek, she herself, for the first time, voluntarily took up the subject.

"Do you remember, my dear Aylmer," said she, with a feeble attempt at a smile, "have you any recollection of a dream last night about this odious hand?"

"None! none whatever!" replied Aylmer, starting; but then he added, in a dry, cold tone, affected for the sake of concealing the real depth of his emotion, "I might well dream of it; for before I fell asleep it had taken a pretty firm hold of my fancy."

"And you did dream of it?" continued Georgiana, hastily; for she dreaded lest a gush of tears should interrupt what she had to say. "A terrible dream! I wonder that you can forget it. Is it possible to forget

this one expression?—"It is in her heart now; we must have it out!" Reflect, my husband; for by all means I would have you recall that dream."

The mind is in a sad state when Sleep, the all-involving, cannot confine her spectres within the dim region of her sway, but suffers them to break forth, affrighting this actual life with secrets that perchance belong to a deeper one. Aylmer now remembered his dream. He had fancied himself with his servant Aminadab, attempting an operation for the removal of the birthmark, but the deeper went the knife, the deeper sank the hand, until at length its tiny grasp appeared to have caught hold of Georgiana's heart, whence, however, her husband was inexorably resolved to cut or wrench it away.

When the dream had shaped itself perfectly in his memory, Aylmer sat in his wife's presence with a guilty feeling. Truth often finds its way to the mind close muffled in robes of sleep, and then speaks with uncompromising directness of matters in regard to which we practise an unconscious self-deception during our waking moment. Until now he had not been aware of the tyrannizing influence acquired by one idea over his mind, and of the lengths which he might find in his heart to go for the sake of giving himself peace.

"Aylmer," resumed Georgiana, solemnly, "I know not what may be the cost to both of us to rid me of this fatal birthmark. Perhaps its removal may cause clueless deformity; or it may be the stain goes as deep as life itself. Again, do we know that there is a possibility, on any terms, of unclasping the firm gripe of this little hand which was laid upon me before I came into the world?"

"Dearest Georgiana, I have spent much thought upon the subject," hastily interrupted Aylmer. "I am convinced of the perfect practicability of its removal."

"If there be the remotest possibility of it," continued Georgiana, "let the attempt be made at whatever risk. Danger is nothing to me, for life, while this hateful mark makes me the object of your horror and disgust,—life is a burden which I would fling down with joy. Either remove this dreadful hand, or take my wretched life! You have deep science. All the world bears witness of it. You have achieved great wonders. Cannot you remove this little, little mark, which I cover with the tips of two small fingers? Is this beyond your power, for the sake of your own

peace, and to save your poor wife from madness?"

"Noblest, dearest, tenderest wife," cried Aylmer, rapturously, "doubt not my power. I have already given this matter the deepest thought—thought which might almost have enlightened me to create a being less perfect than yourself. Georgiana, you have led me deeper than ever into the heart of science. I feel myself fully competent to render this dear cheek as faultless as its fellow; and then, most beloved, what will be my triumph when I shall have corrected what Nature left imperfect in her fairest work! Even Pygmalion, when his sculptured woman assumed life, felt no greater ecstasy than mine will be."

"It is resolved, then," said Georgiana, faintly smiling. "And, Aylmer, spare me not, though you should find the birthmark take refuge in my heart at last."

Her husband tenderly kissed her cheek—her right cheek—not that which bore the impress of the criminal hand.

The next day Aylmer apprised his wife of a plan that he had formed whereby he might have opportunity for the intense thought and constant watchfulness which the proposed operation would require; while Georgiana, likewise, would enjoy the perfect repose essential to its success. They were to seclude themselves in the extensive apartments occupied by Aylmer as a laboratory, and where, during his toilsome youth, he had made discoveries in the elemental powers of Nature that had roused the admiration of all the learned societies in Europe. Seated calmly in this laboratory, the pale philosopher had investigated the secrets of the highest cloud region and of the profoundest mines, he had satisfied himself of the causes that kindled and kept alive the fires of the volcano; and had explained the mystery of fountains, and how it is that they gush forth, some so bright and pure, and others with such rich medicinal virtues, from the dark bosom of the earth. Here, too, at an earlier period, he had studied the wonders of the human frame, and attempted to fathom the very process by which Nature assimilates all her precious influences from earth and air, and from the spiritual world, to create and foster man, her masterpiece. The latter pursuit, however, Aylmer had long laid aside in unwilling recognition of the truth—against which all seekers sooner or later stumble—that our great creative Mother, while she amuses us with apparently working in the broadest sunshine, is yet severely careful to keep her own secrets, and, in spite of her

pretended openness, shows us nothing but results. She permits us, indeed, to mar, but seldom to mend, and, like a jealous patentee, on no account to make. Now, however, Aylmer resumed these half-forgotten investigations, not, of course, with such hopes or wishes as first suggested them, but because they involved much physiological truth and lay in the path of his proposed scheme for the treatment of Georgiana.

As he led her over the threshold of the laboratory, Georgiana was cold and tremulous. Aylmer looked cheerfully into her face, with intent to reassure her, but was so startled with the intense glow of the birthmark upon the whiteness of her cheek that he could not restrain a strong convulsive shudder. His wife fainted.

"Aminadab! Aminadab!" shouted Aylmer, stamping violently on the floor.

Forthwith there issued from an inner apartment a man of low stature, but bulky frame, with shaggy hair hanging about his visage, which was grimed with the vapors of the furnace. This personage had been Aylmer's underworker during his whole scientific career, and was admirably fitted for that office by his great mechanical readiness, and the skill with which, while incapable of comprehending a single principle, he executed all the details of his master's experiments. With his vast strength, his shaggy hair, his smoky aspect, and the indescribable carthiness that incrustated him, he seemed to represent man's physical nature, while Aylmer's slender figure, and pale, intellectual face, were no less apt a type of the spiritual element.

"Throw open the door of the boudoir, Aminadab," said Aylmer, "and burn a pastil."

"Yes, master," answered Aminadab, looking intently at the lifeless form of Georgiana; and then he muttered to himself, "If she were my wife, I'd never part with that birthmark."

When Georgiana recovered consciousness she found herself breathing an atmosphere of penetrating fragrance, the gentle potency of which had recalled her from her deathlike faintness. The scene around her looked like enchantment. Aylmer had converted those smoky, dingy, sombre rooms, where he had spent his brightest years in recondite pursuits, into a series of beautiful apartments not unfit to be the secluded abode of a lovely woman. The walls were hung with gorgeous curtains, which imparted the

combination of grandeur and grace that no other species of adornment can achieve, and as they fell from the ceiling to the floor, their rich and ponderous folds, concealing all angles and straight lines, appeared to shut in the scene from infinite space. For aught Georgiana knew, it might be a pavilion among the clouds. And Aylmer, excluding the sunshine, which would have interfered with his chemical processes, had supplied its place with perfumed lamps, emitting flames of various hue, but all uniting in a soft, impurpled radiance. He now knelt by his wife's side, watching her earnestly, but without alarm; for he was confident in his science, and felt that he could draw a magic circle round her within which no evil might intrude.

"Where am I? Ah, I remember," said Georgiana, faintly, and she placed her hand over her cheek to hide the terrible mark from her husband's eyes.

"Fear not, dearest!" exclaimed he. "Do not shrink from me! Believe me, Georgiana, I even rejoice in this single imperfection, since it will be such a rapture to remove it."

"Oh, spare me!" sadly replied his wife. "Pray do not look at it again. I never can forget that convulsive shudder."

In order to soothe Georgiana, and, as it were, to release her mind from the burden of actual things, Aylmer now put in practice some of the light and playful secrets which science had taught him among its profounder lore. Airy figures, absolutely bodiless ideas, and forms of unsubstantial beauty came and danced before her, imprinting their momentary footsteps on beams of light. Though she had some indistinct idea of the method of these optical phenomena, still the illusion was almost perfect enough to warrant the belief that her husband possessed sway over the spiritual world. Then again, when she felt a wish to look forth from her seclusion, immediately, as if her thoughts were answered, the procession of external existence flitted across a screen. The scenery and the figures of actual life were perfectly represented, but with that bewitching, yet indescribable difference which always makes a picture, an image, or a shadow so much more attractive than the original. When wearied of this Aylmer bade her cast her eyes upon a vessel containing a quantity of earth. She did so, with little interest at first; but was soon startled to perceive the germ of a plant shooting upward from the soil. Then came the slender

stalk; the leaves gradually unfolded themselves; and amid them was a perfect and lovely flower.

"It is magical!" cried Georgiana. "I dare not touch it."

"Nay, pluck it," answered Aylmer,—"pluck it, and inhale its brief perfume while you may. The flower will wither in a few moments and leave nothing save its brown seed vessels, but thence may be perpetuated a race as ephemeral as itself."

But Georgiana had no sooner touched the flower <sup>10</sup> than the whole plant suffered a blight, its leaves turning coal-black as if by the agency of fire.

"There was too powerful a stimulus," said Aylmer, thoughtfully.

To make up for this abortive experiment, he proposed to take her portrait by a scientific process of his own invention. It was to be effected by rays of light striking upon a polished plate of metal. Georgiana assented, but, on looking at the result, was affrighted to find the features of the portrait <sup>20</sup> blurred and indefinite; while the minute figure of a hand appeared where the cheek should have been. Aylmer snatched the metallic plate and threw it into a jar of corrosive acid.

Soon, however, he forgot these mortifying failures. In the intervals of study and chemical experiment he came to her flushed and exhausted, but seemed invigorated by her presence, and spoke in glowing language of the resources of his art. He gave a history of the long dynasty of the alchemists, who spent so <sup>30</sup> many ages in quest of the universal solvent by which the golden principle might be elicited from all things vile and base. Aylmer appeared to believe that, by the plainest scientific logic, it was altogether within the limits of possibility to discover this long-sought medium; "but," he added, "a philosopher who should go deep enough to acquire the power would attain too lofty a wisdom to stoop to the exercise of it." Not less singular were his opinions in regard to the elixir *vitaë*. He more than intimated that it was at his <sup>40</sup> option to concoct a liquid that should prolong life for years, perhaps interminably, but that it would produce a discord in Nature which all the world, and chiefly the quaffer of the immortal nostrum, would find cause to curse.

"Aylmer, are you in earnest?" asked Georgiana, looking at him with amazement and fear. "It is terrible to possess such power, or even to dream of possessing it."

"Oh, do not tremble, my love," said her husband. "I would not wrong either you or myself by working such inharmonious effects upon our lives, but I would have you consider how trifling, in comparison, is the skill requisite to remove this little hand."

At the mention of the birthmark, Georgiana, as usual, shrank as if a red-hot iron had touched her cheek.

Again Aylmer applied himself to his labors. She could hear his voice in the distant furnace room giving directions to Aminadab, whose harsh, uncouth, misshapen tones were audible in response, more like the grunt or growl of a brute than human speech. After hours of absence, Aylmer reappeared and proposed that she should now examine his cabinet of chemical products and natural treasures of the earth. Among the former he showed her a small vial, in which, he remarked, was contained a gentle yet most powerful fragrance, capable of impregnating all the breezes that blow across a kingdom. They were of inestimable value, the contents of that little vial; and, as he said so, he threw some of the perfume into the air and filled the room with piercing and invigorating delight.

"And what is this?" asked Georgiana, pointing to a small crystal globe containing a gold-colored liquid. "It is so beautiful to the eye that I could imagine it the elixir of life."

"In one sense it is," replied Aylmer; "or, rather, the elixir of immortality. It is the most precious poison that ever was concocted in this world. By its aid I could apportion the lifetime of any mortal at whom you might point your finger. The strength of the dose would determine whether he were to linger out years, or drop dead in the midst of a breath. No king on his guarded throne could keep his life if I, in my private station, should deem that the welfare of millions justified me in depriving him of it."

"Why do you keep such a terrific drug?" inquired Georgiana in horror.

"Do not mistrust me, dearest," said her husband, smiling; "its virtuous potency is yet greater than its harmful one. But see! here is a powerful cosmetic. With a few drops of this in a vase of water, freckles may be washed away as easily as the hands are cleansed. A stronger infusion would take the blood out of the cheek, and leave the sickest beauty a pale ghost."

"Is it with this lotion that you intend to bathe my cheek?" asked Georgiana, anxiously

"Oh, no," hastily replied her husband, "this is merely superficial. Your case demands a remedy that shall go deeper"

In his interviews with Georgiana, Aylmer generally made minute inquiries as to her sensations and whether the confinement of the rooms and the temperature of the atmosphere agreed with her. These questions had such a particular drift that Georgiana<sup>10</sup> began to conjecture that she was already subjected to certain physical influences, either breathed in with the fragrant air or taken with her food. She fancied likewise, but it might be altogether fancy, that there was a stirring up of her system—a strange, indefinite sensation creeping through her veins, and tingling, half painfully, half pleasurably, at her heart. Still, whenever she dared to look into the mirror, there she beheld herself pale as a white rose and with the crimson birthmark stamped upon her cheek. Not even<sup>20</sup> Aylmer now hated it so much as she.

To dispel the tedium of the hours which her husband found it necessary to devote to the processes of combination and analysis, Georgiana turned over the volumes of his scientific library. In many dark old tomes she met with chapters full of romance and poetry. They were the works of the philosophers of the middle ages, such as Albertus Magnus, Cornelius Agrippa, Paracelsus, and the famous friar<sup>40</sup> who created the prophetic Brazen Head. All these antique<sup>30</sup> naturalists stood in advance of their centuries, yet were imbued with some of their credulity, and therefore were believed, and perhaps imagined themselves to have acquired from the investigation of Nature a power above Nature, and from physics a sway over the spiritual world. Hardly less curious and imaginative were the early volumes of the Transactions of the Royal Society, in which the members, knowing little of the limits of natural possibility, were continually recording wonders or proposing methods<sup>40</sup> whereby wonders might be wrought.

But to Georgiana the most engrossing volume was a large folio from her husband's own hand, in which he had recorded every experiment of his scientific career, its original aim, the methods adopted for its development, and its final success or failure, with the

circumstances to which either event was attributable. The book, in truth, was both the history and emblem of his ardent, ambitious, imaginative, yet practical and laborious life. He handled physical details as if there were nothing beyond them, yet spiritualized them all, and redeemed himself from materialism by his strong and eager aspiration towards the infinite. In his grasp the veiest clod of earth assumed a soul. Georgiana, as she read, revered Aylmer and loved him more profoundly than ever, but with a less entire dependence on his judgment than heretofore. Much as he had accomplished, she could not but observe that his most splendid successes were almost invariably failures, if compared with the ideal at which he aimed. His brightest diamonds were the merest pebbles, and felt to be so by himself, in comparison with the inestimable gems which lay hidden beyond his reach. The volume, rich with achievements that had won renown for its author, was yet as melancholy a record as ever mortal hand had penned. It was the sad confession and continual exemplification of the shortcomings of the composite man, the spirit burdened with clay and working in matter, and of the despair that assails the higher nature at finding itself so miserably thwarted by the earthly part. Perhaps every man of genius in whatever sphere might recognize the image of his own experience in Aylmer's journal.

So deeply did these reflections affect Georgiana that she laid her face upon the open volume and burst into tears. In this situation she was found by her husband.

"It is dangerous to read in a sorcerer's books," said he with a smile, though his countenance was uneasy and displeased. "Georgiana, there are pages in that volume which I can scarcely glance over and keep my senses. Take heed lest it prove as detrimental to you."

"It has made me worship you more than ever," said she.

"Ah, wait for this one success," rejoined he, "then worship me if you will. I shall deem myself hardly unworthy of it. But come, I have sought you for the luxury of your voice. Sing to me, dearest."

So she poured out the liquid music of her voice to quench the thirst of his spirit. He then took his leave with a boyish exuberance of gayety, assuring her that her seclusion would endure but a little longer, and that the result was already certain. Scarcely had he

<sup>40</sup> The famous friar is Roger Bacon. Hawthorne here names four members of "the long dynasty of alchemists" ranging from the twelfth to the sixteenth century.



departed when Georgiana felt irresistibly impelled to follow him. She had forgotten to inform Aylmer of a symptom which for two or three hours past had begun to excite her attention. It was a sensation in the fatal birthmark, not painful, but which induced a restlessness throughout her system. Hastening after her husband, she intruded for the first time into the laboratory.

The first thing that struck her eye was the furnace, that hot and feverish worker, with the intense glow of its fire, which by the quantities of soot clustered above it seemed to have been burning for ages. There was a distilling apparatus in full operation. Around the room were retorts, tubes, cylinders, crucibles, and other apparatus of chemical research. An electrical machine stood ready for immediate use. The atmosphere felt oppressively close, and was tainted with gaseous odors which had been tormented forth by the processes of science. The severe and homely simplicity of the apartment, with its naked walls and brick pavement, looked strange, accustomed as Georgiana had become to the fantastic elegance of her boudoir. But what chiefly, indeed almost solely, drew her attention, was the aspect of Aylmer himself.

He was pale as death, anxious and absorbed, and hung over the furnace as if it depended upon his utmost watchfulness whether the liquid which it was distilling should be the draught of immortal happiness or misery. How different from the sanguine and joyous mien that he had assumed for Georgiana's encouragement!

"Carefully now, Aminadab, carefully, thou human machine, carefully, thou man of clay!" muttered Aylmer, more to himself than his assistant. "Now, if there be a thought too much or too little, it is all over."

"Ho! ho!" mumbled Aminadab. "Look, master! look!"

Aylmer raised his eyes hastily, and at first reddened, then grew paler than ever, on beholding Georgiana. He rushed towards her and seized her arm with a gripe that left the print of his fingers upon it.

"Why do you come hither? Have you no trust in your husband?" cried he, impetuously. "Would you throw the blight of that fatal birthmark over my labors? It is not well done. Go, prying woman, go!"

"Nay, Aylmer," said Georgiana with the firmness of which she possessed no stinted endowment, "it is

not you that have a right to complain. You mistrust your wife; you have concealed the anxiety with which you watch the development of this experiment. Think not so unworthily of me, my husband. Tell me all the risk we run, and fear not that I shall shrink; for my share in it is far less than your own."

"No, no, Georgiana!" said Aylmer, impatiently; "it must not be."

"I submit," replied she calmly. "And, Aylmer, I shall quaff whatever draught you bring me, but it will be on the same principle that would induce me to take a dose of poison if offered by your hand."

"My noble wife," said Aylmer, deeply moved, "I knew not the height and depth of your nature until now. Nothing shall be concealed. Know, then, that this crimson hand, superficial as it seems, has clutched its grasp into your being with a strength of which I had no previous conception. I have already administered agents powerful enough to do aught except to change your entire physical system. Only one thing remains to be tried. If that fail us we are ruined."

"Why did you hesitate to tell me this?" asked she.

"Because, Georgiana," said Aylmer, in a low voice, "there is danger."

"Danger? There is but one danger—that this horrible stigma shall be left upon my cheek!" cried Georgiana. "Remove it, remove it, whatever be the cost, or we shall both go mad!"

"Heaven knows your words are too true," said Aylmer, sadly. "And now, dearest, return to your boudoir. In a little while all will be tested."

He conducted her back and took leave of her with a solemn tenderness which spoke far more than his words how much was now at stake. After his departure Georgiana became rapt in musings. She considered the character of Aylmer, and did it complete justice than at any previous moment. Her heart exulted, while it trembled, at his honorable love—so pure and lofty that it would accept nothing less than perfection nor miserably make itself contented with an earthlier nature than he had dreamed of. She felt how much more precious was such a sentiment than that meaner kind which would have borne with the imperfection for her sake, and have been guilty of treason to holy love by degrading its perfect idea to the level of the actual; and with her whole spirit she prayed that, for a single moment, she might satisfy his highest and deepest conception. Longer

than one moment she well knew it could not be, for his spirit was ever on the march, ever ascending, and each instant required something that was beyond the scope of the instant before

The sound of her husband's footsteps aroused her. He bore a crystal goblet containing a liquor colorless as water, but bright enough to be the draught of immortality. Aylmer was pale, but it seemed rather the consequence of a highly-wrought state of mind and tension of spirit than of fear or doubt.

"The concoction of the draught has been perfect," said he, in answer to Georgiana's look. "Unless all my science have deceived me, it cannot fail."

"Save on your account, my dearest Aylmer," observed his wife, "I might wish to put off this birthmark of mortality by relinquishing mortality itself in preference to any other mode. Life is but a sad possession to those who have attained precisely the degree of moral advancement at which I stand. Were I weaker and blinder it might be happiness. Were I stronger, it might be endured hopefully. But, being what I find myself, methinks I am of all mortals the most fit to die."

"You are fit for heaven without tasting death!" replied her husband. "But why do we speak of dying? The draught cannot fail. Behold its effect upon this plant."

On the window seat there stood a geranium diseased with yellow blotches, which had overspread all its leaves. Aylmer poured a small quantity of the liquid upon the soil in which it grew. In a little time, when the roots of the plant had taken up the moisture, the unsightly blotches began to be extinguished in a living verdure.

"There needed no proof," said Georgiana, quietly. "Give me the goblet. I joyfully stake all upon your word."

"Drink, then, thou lofty creature!" exclaimed Aylmer, with fervid admiration. "There is no taint of imperfection on thy spirit. Thy sensible frame, too, shall soon be all perfect."

She quaffed the liquid and returned the goblet to his hand.

"It is grateful," said she with a placid smile. "Methinks it is like water from a heavenly fountain; for it contains I know not what of unobtrusive fragrance and deliciousness. It allays a feverish thirst that had parched me for many days. Now, dearest, let me sleep. My earthly senses are closing over my spirit

like the leaves around the heart of a rose at sunset."

She spoke the last words with a gentle reluctance, as if it required almost more energy than she could command to pronounce the faint and lingering syllables. Scarcely had they loitered through her lips ere she was lost in slumber. Aylmer sat by her side, watching her aspect with the emotions proper to a man the whole value of whose existence was involved in the process now to be tested. Mingled with this mood, however, was the philosophic investigation characteristic of the man of science. Not the minutest symptom escaped him. A heightened flush of the cheek, a slight irregularity of breath, a quiver of the eyelid, a hardly perceptible tremor through the frame,—such were the details which, as the moments passed, he wrote down in his folio volume. Intense thought had set its stamp upon every previous page of that volume, but the thoughts of years were all concentrated upon the last.

While thus employed, he failed not to gaze often at the fatal hand, and not without a shudder. Yet once, by a strange and unaccountable impulse, he pressed it with his lips. His spirit recoiled, however, in the very act; and Georgiana, out of the midst of her deep sleep, moved uneasily and murmured as if in remonstrance. Again Aylmer resumed his watch. Nor was it without avail. The crimson hand, which at first had been strongly visible upon the marble paleness of Georgiana's cheek, now grew more faintly outlined. She remained not less pale than ever, but the birthmark, with every breath that came and went, lost somewhat of its former distinctness. Its presence had been awful, its departure was more awful still. Watch the stain of the rainbow fading out of the sky, and you will know how that mysterious symbol passed away.

"By Heaven! it is well-nigh gone!" said Aylmer to himself, in almost irrepressible ecstasy. "I can scarcely trace it now. Success! success! And now it is like the faintest rose color. The lightest flush of blood across her cheek would overcome it. But she is so pale!"

He drew aside the window curtain and suffered the light of natural day to fall into the room and rest upon her cheek. At the same time he heard a gross, hoarse chuckle, which he had long known as his servant Aminadab's expression of delight.

"Ah, clod! ah, earthly mass!" cried Aylmer, laughing in a sort of frenzy, "you have served me well!"

Matter and spirit—earth and heaven—have both done their part in this! Laugh, thing of the senses! You have earned the right to laugh.”

These exclamations broke Gcoigiana's sleep. She slowly unclosed her eyes and gazed into the mirror which her husband had arranged for that purpose. A faint smile flitted over her lips when she recognized how barely perceptible was now that crimson hand which had once blazed forth with such disastrous brilliancy as to scare away all their happiness. But then her eyes sought Aylmer's face with a trouble and anxiety that he could by no means account for.

“My poor Aylmer!” murmured she

“Poor? Nay, richest, happiest, most favored!” exclaimed he “My peerless bride, it is successful! You are perfect!”

“My poor Aylmer,” she repeated, with a more than human tenderness, “you have aimed loftily; you have done nobly. Do not repent that with so high and pure a feeling, you have rejected the best the earth could offer. Aylmer, dearest Aylmer, I am dying!”

Alas! it was too true! The fatal hand had grappled with the mystery of life, and was the bond by which an angelic spirit kept itself in union with a mortal frame. As the last crimson tint of the birthmark—that sole token of human imperfection—faded from her cheek, the parting breath of the now perfect woman passed into the atmosphere, and her soul, lingering a moment near her husband, took its heavenward flight. Then a hoarse, chuckling laugh was heard again! Thus ever does the gross fatality of earth exult in its invariable triumph over the immortal essence which, in this dim sphere of half development, demands the completeness of a higher state. Yet, had Aylmer reached a profounder wisdom, he need not thus have flung away the happiness which would have woven his mortal life of the selfsame texture with the celestial. The momentary circumstance was too strong for him; he failed to look beyond the shadowy scope of time, and, living once for all in eternity, to find the perfect future in the present.

March, 1843

1846

### *The Celestial Railroad*<sup>41</sup>

Not a great while ago, passing through the gate of dreams, I visited that region of the earth in which lies the famous City of Destruction. It interested me much to learn that by the public spirit of some of the inhabitants a railroad has recently been established between this populous and flourishing town and the Celestial City. Having a little time upon my hands, I resolved to gratify a liberal curiosity by making a trip thither. Accordingly, one fine morning after paying my bill at the hotel, and directing the porter to stow my luggage behind a coach, I took my seat in the vehicle and set out for the station-house. It was my good fortune to enjoy the company of a gentleman—one Mr. Smooth-it-away<sup>42</sup>—who, though he had never actually visited the Celestial City, yet seemed as well acquainted with its laws, customs, policy, and statistics, as with those of the City of Destruction, of which he was a native townsman. Being, moreover, a director of the railroad corporation and one of its largest stockholders, he had it in his power to give me all desirable information respecting that praiseworthy enterprise.

Our coach rattled out of the city, and at a short distance from its outskirts passed over a bridge of elegant construction, but somewhat too slight, as I imagined, to sustain any considerable weight. On both sides lay an extensive quagmire, which could not have been more disagreeable, either to sight or smell, had all the kennels of the earth emptied their pollution there.

“This,” remarked Mr. Smooth-it-away, “is the famous Slough of Despond—a disgrace to all the neighborhood, and the greater that it might so easily be converted into firm ground.”

“I have understood,” said I, “that efforts have been made for that purpose from time immemorial. Bunyan mentions that above twenty thousand cartloads of wholesome instructions had been thrown in here without effect.”

“Very probably! And what effect could be anticipated from such unsubstantial stuff?” cried Mr.

<sup>41</sup> “The Celestial Railroad” was published in the *Democratic Review* in May, 1843. It obviously is indebted to Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* and a tribute to the hard realities of older religious doctrines, and is also a palpable “hit” at the disciples of the newer religions seeking an easy way to heaven—among them the “vaguely liberal clergymen” of the day, including Transcendentalists like Emerson.

The student will find Hawthorne's prefatory sketch to *Mosses from an Old Manse*, entitled “The Old Manse,” interesting both as revealing Hawthorne the man in the atmosphere of Concord and as affording an insight into Hawthorne's religious views.

<sup>42</sup> “Mr. Smooth-man” is a citizen of the Vanity Fair in Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*.

Smooth-it-away. "You observe this convenient bridge We obtained a sufficient foundation for it by throwing into the slough some editions of books of morality, volumes of French philosophy and German rationalism, tracts, sermons, and essays of modern clergymen, extracts from Plato, Confucius, and various Hindoo sages, together with a few ingenious commentaries upon texts of Scripture,—all of which by some scientific process, have been converted into a mass like granite. The whole bog might be filled up with similar matter"

It really seemed to me, however, that the bridge vibrated and heaved up and down in a very formidable manner, and, spite of Mr. Smooth-it-away's testimony to the solidity of its foundation, I should be loath to cross it in a crowded omnibus, especially if each passenger were encumbered with as heavy luggage as that gentleman and myself. Nevertheless we got over without accident, and soon found ourselves at the station-house. This very neat and spacious edifice is erected on the site of the little wicket gate, which formerly, as all old pilgrims will recollect, stood directly across the highway, and, by its inconvenient narrowness, was a great obstruction to the traveller of liberal mind and expansive stomach. The reader of John Bunyan will be glad to know that Christian's old friend Evangelist, who was accustomed to supply each pilgrim with a mystic roll,<sup>43</sup> now presides at the ticket office. Some malicious persons it is true deny the identity of this reputable character with the Evangelist of old times, and even pretend to bring competent evidence of an imposture. Without involving myself in a dispute I shall merely observe that, so far as my experience goes, the square pieces of pasteboard now delivered to passengers are much more convenient and useful along the road than the antique roll of parchment. Whether they will be as readily received at the gate of the Celestial City I decline giving an opinion.

A large number of passengers were already at the station-house awaiting the departure of the cars. By the aspect and demeanor of these persons it was easy to judge that the feelings of the community had undergone a very favorable change in reference to the celestial pilgrimage. It would have done Bunyan's heart good to see it. Instead of a lonely and ragged man with a huge burden on his back, plodding along

sorrowfully on foot while the whole city hooted after him, here were parties of the first gentry and most respectable people in the neighborhood setting forth towards the Celestial City as cheerfully as if the pilgrimage were merely a summer tour. Among the gentlemen were characters of deserved eminence—magistrates, politicians, and men of wealth, by whose example religion could not but be greatly recommended to their meaner brethren. In the ladies' apartment, too, I rejoiced to distinguish some of those flowers of fashionable society who are so well fitted to adorn the most elevated circles of the Celestial City. There was much pleasant conversation about the news of the day, topics of business and politics, or the lighter matters of amusement, while religion, though indubitably the main thing at heart, was thrown tastefully into the background. Even an infidel would have heard little or nothing to shock his sensibility.

One great convenience of the new method of going on pilgrimage I must not forget to mention. Our enormous burdens, instead of being carried on our shoulders as had been the custom of old, were all snugly deposited in the baggage car, and, as I was assured, would be delivered to their respective owners at the journey's end. Another thing, likewise, the benevolent reader will be delighted to understand. It may be remembered that there was an ancient feud between Prince Beelzebub<sup>44</sup> and the keeper of the wicket gate, and that the adherents of the former distinguished personage were accustomed to shoot deadly arrows at honest pilgrims while knocking at the door. This dispute, much to the credit as well of the illustrious potentate above mentioned as of the worthy and enlightened directors of the railroad, has been pacifically arranged on the principle of mutual compromise. The prince's subjects are now pretty numerously employed about the station-house, some in taking care of the baggage, others in collecting fuel, feeding the engines, and such congenial occupations; and I can conscientiously affirm that persons more attentive to their business, more willing to accommodate, or more generally agreeable to the passengers, are not to be found on any railroad. Every good heart must surely exult at so satisfactory an arrangement of an immemorial difficulty.

<sup>43</sup> The Evangelist's roll in *Pilgrim's Progress* contains the advice. "Fly from the wrath to come."

<sup>44</sup> In Matthew 12 24, Beelzebub is "The prince of devils"; in Milton's *Paradise Lost* he is second only to Satan himself; in Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* he is the captain of the castle near the Wicket-Gate.

"Where is Mr. Greatheart?"<sup>45</sup> inquired I "Beyond a doubt the directors have engaged that famous old champion to be chief conductor on the railroad?"

"Why, no," said Mr Smooth-it-away, with a dry cough. "He was offered the situation of brakeman, but, to tell you the truth, our friend Greatheart has grown preposterously stiff and narrow in his old age. He has so often guided pilgrims over the road on foot that he considers it a sin to travel in any other fashion. Besides, the old fellow had entered so heartily into the ancient feud with Prince Beelzebub that he would have been perpetually at blows or ill language with some of the prince's subjects, and thus have embroiled us anew. So, on the whole, we were not sorry when honest Greatheart went off to the Celestial City in a huff and left us at liberty to choose a more suitable and accommodating man. Yonder comes the engineer of the train. You will probably recognize him at once."

The engine at this moment took its station in advance of the cars, looking, I must confess, much more like a sort of mechanical demon that would hurry us to the infernal regions than a laudable contrivance for smoothing our way to the Celestial City. On its top sat a personage almost enveloped in smoke and flame, which, not to startle the reader, appeared to gush from his own mouth and stomach as well as from the engine's brazen abdomen.<sup>46</sup>

"Do my eyes deceive me?" cried I. "What on earth is this! A living creature? If so, he is own brother to the engine he rides upon!"

"Poh, poh, you are obtuse!" said Mr. Smooth-it-away, with a hearty laugh. "Don't you know Apollyon,<sup>47</sup> Christian's old enemy, with whom he fought so fierce a battle in the Valley of Humiliation? He was the very fellow to manage the engine, and so we have reconciled him to the custom of going on pilgrimage, and engaged him as chief engineer."

"Bravo, bravo!" exclaimed I, with irrepressible enthusiasm, "this shows the liberality of the age, this proves, if anything can, that all musty prejudices are

<sup>45</sup> In Part II of *Pilgrim's Progress* Mr Greatheart valiantly helps Christian's wife and sons on their journey to the Celestial City.

<sup>46</sup> This description of Apollyon is reminiscent of *Pilgrim's Progress*, where Apollyon is "clothed with scales like a fish . . . he had wings like a dragon, feet like a bear, and out of his belly came fire and smoke, and his mouth was as the mouth of a lion."

<sup>47</sup> Apollyon, the angel of the bottomless pit, in *Pilgrim's Progress* becomes the fiend overcome by Christian.

in a fair way to be obliterated. And how will Christian rejoice to hear of this happy transformation of his old antagonist! I promise myself great pleasure in informing him of it when we reach the Celestial City."

The passengers being all comfortably seated, we now rattled away merrily, accomplishing a greater distance in ten minutes than Christian probably trudged over in a day. It was laughable, while we glanced along, as it were, at the tail of a thunderbolt, to observe two dusty foot travellers in the old pilgrim guise, with cockle shell and staff, their mystic rolls of parchment in their hands and their intolerable burdens on their backs. The preposterous obstinacy of these honest people in persisting to groan and stumble along the difficult pathway rather than take advantage of modern improvements, excited great mirth among our wiser brotherhood. We greeted the two pilgrims with many pleasant gibes and a roar of laughter; whereupon they gazed at us with such woful and absurdly compassionate visages that our merriment grew tenfold more obstreperous. Apollyon also entered heartily into the fun, and contrived to flit the smoke and flame of the engine, or of his own breath, into their faces, and envelop them in an atmosphere of scalding steam. These little practical jokes amused us mightily, and doubtless afforded the pilgrims the gratification of considering themselves martyrs.

At some distance from the railroad Mr. Smooth-it-away pointed to a large, antique edifice, which, he observed, was a tavern of long standing, and had formerly been a noted stopping-place for pilgrims. In Bunyan's road-book it is mentioned as the Interpreter's House.

"I have long had a curiosity to visit that old mansion," remarked I.

"It is not one of our stations, as you perceive," said my companion. "The keeper was violently opposed to the railroad; and well he might be, as the track left his house of entertainment on one side, and thus was pretty certain to deprive him of all his reputable customers. But the footpath still passes his door, and the old gentleman now and then receives a call from some simple traveller, and entertains him with fare as old-fashioned as himself."

Before our talk on this subject came to a conclusion we were rushing by the place where Christian's burden fell from his shoulders at the sight of the

Cross This served as a theme for Mr Smooth-it-away, Mr Live-for-the-world, Mr. Hide-sin-in-the-heart, Mr Scaly-conscience,<sup>48</sup> and a knot of gentleman from the town of Shun-repentance, to descant upon the inestimable advantages resulting from the safety of our baggage. Myself, and all the passengers indeed, joined with great unanimity in this view of the matter, for our burdens were rich in many things esteemed precious throughout the world, and, especially, we each of us possessed a great variety of 10 favorite Habits, which we trusted would not be out of fashion even in the polite circles of the Celestial City. It would have been a sad spectacle to see such an assortment of valuable articles tumbling into the sepulchre. Thus pleasantly conversing on the favorable circumstances of our position as compared with those of past pilgrims and of narrow-minded ones at the present day, we soon found ourselves at the foot of the Hill Difficulty. Through the very heart of this rocky mountain a tunnel has been constructed of 20 most admirable architecture, with a lofty arch and a spacious double track, so that, unless the earth and rocks should chance to crumble down, it will remain an eternal monument of the builder's skill and enterprise. It is a great though incidental advantage that the materials from the heart of the Hill Difficulty have been employed in filling up the Valley of Humiliation, thus obviating the necessity of descending into that disagreeable and unwholesome hollow.

"This is a wonderful improvement, indeed," said I 30 "Yet I should have been glad of an opportunity to visit the Palace Beautiful and be introduced to the charming young ladies—Miss Prudence, Miss Piety, Miss Charity, and the rest—who have the kindness to entertain pilgrims there."

"Young ladies!" cried Mr Smooth-it-away, as soon as he could speak for laughing. "And charming young ladies! Why, my dear fellow, they are old maids, every soul of them—grim, starched, dry, and angular; and not one of them, I will venture to say, has altered 40 so much as the fashion of her gown since the days of Christian's pilgrimage."

"Ah, well," said I, much comforted, "then I can very readily dispense with their acquaintance."

The respectable Apollyon was now putting on the steam at a prodigious rate, anxious, perhaps, to get rid of the unpleasant reminiscences connected with

the spot where he had so disastrously encountered Christian. Consulting Mr Bunyan's road-book, I perceived that we must now be within a few miles of the Valley of the Shadow of Death, into which doleful region, at our present speed, we should plunge much sooner than seemed at all desirable. In truth, I expected nothing better than to find myself in the ditch on one side or the quag on the other, but on communicating my apprehensions to Mr Smooth-it-away, he assured me that the difficulties of this passage, even in its worst condition, had been vastly exaggerated, and that, in its present state of improvement, I might consider myself as safe as on any railroad in Christendom.

Even while we were speaking the train shot into the entrance of this dreaded Valley. Though I pleaded guilty to some foolish palpitations of the heart during our headlong rush over the causeway here constructed, yet it were unjust to withhold the highest encomiums on the boldness of its original conception and the ingenuity of those who executed it. It was gratifying, likewise, to observe how much care had been taken to dispel the everlasting gloom and supply the defect of cheerful sunshine, not a ray of which has ever penetrated among these awful shadows. For this purpose, the inflammable gas which exudes plentifully from the soil is collected by means of pipes, and thence communicated to a quadruple row of lamps along the whole extent of the passage. Thus a radiance has been created even out of the fiery and sulphurous curse that rests forever upon the valley—a radiance hurtful, however, to the eyes, and somewhat bewildering, as I discovered by the changes which it wrought in the visages of my companions. In this respect, as compared with natural daylight, there is the same difference as between truth and falsehood; but if the reader have ever travelled through the dark Valley, he will have learned to be thankful for any light that he could get—if not from the sky above, then from the blasted soil beneath. Such was the red brilliancy of these lamps that they appeared to build walls of fire on both sides of the track, between which we held our course at lightning speed, while a reverberating thunder filled the Valley with its echoes. Had the engine run off the track,—a catastrophe, it is whispered, by no means unprecedented,—the bottomless pit, if there be any such place, would undoubtedly have received us. Just as some dismal fooleries of this nature had made my heart quake

<sup>48</sup> These names are reminiscent of Bunyan's. "Mr Love-lust, Mr. Live-loose, Lord Time-server, and Mr. Facing-both-ways."

there came a tremendous shriek, careering along the valley as if a thousand devils had burst their lungs to utter it, but which proved to be merely the whistle of the engine on arriving at a stopping-place

The spot where we had now paused is the same that our friend Bunyan—a truthful man, but infected with many fantastic notions—has designated, in terms plainer than I like to repeat, as the mouth of the infernal region. This, however, must be a mistake, inasmuch as Mr Smooth-it-away, while we remained in the smoky and lurid cavern, took occasion to prove that Tophet<sup>49</sup> has not even a metaphorical existence. The place, he assured us, is no other than the crater of a half-extinct volcano, in which the directors had caused forges to be set up for the manufacture of railroad iron. Hence, also, is obtained a plentiful supply of fuel for the use of the engines. Whoever had gazed into the dismal obscurity of the broad cavern mouth, whence ever and anon darted huge tongues of dusky flame, and had seen the strange, half-shaped monsters, and visions of faces horribly grotesque, into which the smoke seemed to wreath itself, and had heard the awful murmurs, and shrieks, and deep shuddering whispers of the blast, sometimes forming themselves into words almost articulate, would have seized upon Mr Smooth-it-away's comfortable explanation as gladly as we did. The inhabitants of the cavern, moreover, were unlovely personages, dark, smoke-begrimed, generally deformed, with misshapen feet, and a glow of dusky redness in their eyes as if their hearts had caught fire and were blazing out of the upper windows. It struck me as a peculiarity that the laborers at the forge and those who brought fuel to the engine, when they began to draw short breath, positively emitted smoke from their mouth and nostrils.

Among the idlers about the train, most of whom were puffing cigars which they had lighted at the flame of the crater, I was perplexed to notice several who, to my certain knowledge, had heretofore set forth by railroad for the Celestial City. They looked dark, wild, and smoky, with a singular resemblance, indeed, to the native inhabitants, like whom, also, they had a disagreeable propensity to ill-natured gibes and sneers, the habit of which had wrought a settled contortion of their visages. Having been on speaking terms with one of these persons,—an indolent, good-for-nothing fellow, who went by the name of Take-it-

easy,—I called him, and inquired what was his business there.

"Did you not start," said I, "for the Celestial City?"

"That's a fact," said Mr Take-it-easy, carelessly puffing some smoke into my eyes. "But I heard such bad accounts that I never took pains to climb the hill on which the city stands. No business doing, no fun going on, nothing to drink, and no smoking allowed, and a thrumming of church music from morning till night. I would not stay in such a place if they offered me house room and living free."

"But, my good Mr. Take-it-easy," cried I, "why take up your residence here, of all places in the world?"

"Oh," said the loafer, with a grin, "it is very warm hereabouts, and I meet with plenty of old acquaintances, and altogether the place suits me. I hope to see you back again some day soon. A pleasant journey to you."

While he was speaking the bell of the engine rang, and we dashed away after dropping a few passengers, but receiving no new ones. Rattling onward through the Valley, we were dazzled with the fiercely gleaming gas lamps, as before. But sometimes, in the dark of intense brightness, grim faces, that bore the aspect and expression of individual sins, or evil passions, seemed to thrust themselves through the veil of light, glaring upon us, and stretching forth a great, dusky hand, as if to impede our progress. I almost thought that they were my own sins that appalled me there. These were freaks of imagination—nothing more, certainly—mere delusions, which I ought to be heartily ashamed of; but all through the Dark Valley I was tormented, and pestered, and dolefully bewildered with the same kind of waking dreams. The mephitic gases of that region intoxicate the brain. As the light of natural day, however, began to struggle with the glow of the lanterns, these vain imaginations lost their vividness, and finally vanished with the first ray of sunshine that greeted our escape from the Valley of the Shadow of Death. Ere we had gone a mile beyond it I could well-nigh have taken my oath that this whole gloomy passage was a dream.

At the end of the valley, as John Bunyan mentions, is a cavern, where, in his days, dwelt two cruel giants, Pope and Pagan, who had strown the ground about their residence with the bones of slaughtered pilgrims. These vile old troglodytes are no longer there; but

<sup>49</sup> Here used in the sense of Hell

into their deserted cave another terrible giant has thrust himself, and makes it his business to seize upon honest travellers and fatten them for his table with plentiful meals of smoke, mist, moonshine, raw potatoes, and sawdust. He is a German by birth, and is called Giant Transcendentalist, but as to his form, his features, his substance, and his nature generally, it is the chief peculiarity of this huge miscreant that neither he for himself, nor anybody for him, has ever been able to describe them. As we rushed by the cavern's mouth we caught a hasty glimpse of him, looking somewhat like an ill-proportioned figure, but considerably more like a heap of fog and duskiness. He shouted after us, but in so strange a phrasology that we knew not what he meant, nor whether to be encouraged or affrighted.

It was late in the day when the train thundered into the ancient city of Vanity, where Vanity Fair is still at the height of prosperity, and exhibits an epitome of whatever is brilliant, gay, and fascinating beneath the sun. As I purposed to make a considerable stay here, it gratified me to learn that there is no longer the want of harmony between the townspeople and pilgrims, which impelled the former to such lamentably mistaken measures as the persecution of Christian and the fiery martyrdom of Faithful. On the contrary, as the new railroad brings with it great trade and a constant influx of strangers, the lord of Vanity Fair is its chief patron, and the capitalists of the city are among the largest stockholders. Many passengers stop to take their pleasure or make their profit in the Fair, instead of going onward to the Celestial City. Indeed, such are the charms of the place that people often affirm it to be the true and only heaven; stoutly contending that there is no other, that those who seek further are mere dreamers, and that, if the fabled brightness of the Celestial City lay but a bare mile beyond the gates of Vanity, they would not be fools enough to go thither. Without subscribing to these perhaps exaggerated encomiums, I can truly say that my abode in the city was mainly agreeable, and my intercourse with the inhabitants productive of much amusement and instruction.

Being naturally of a serious turn, my attention was directed to the solid advantages derivable from a residence here, rather than to the effervescent pleasures which are the grand object with too many visitants. The Christian reader, if he have had no accounts of the city later than Bunyan's time, will be

surprised to hear that almost every street has its church, and that the reverend clergy are nowhere held in higher respect than at Vanity Fair. And well do they deserve such honorable estimation, for the maxims of wisdom and virtue which fall from their lips come from as deep a spiritual source, and tend to as lofty a religious aim, as those of the sagest philosophers of old. In justification of this high praise I need only mention the names of the Rev. Mr. Shallow-deep, the Rev. Mr. Stumble-at-truth, that fine old clerical character the Rev. This-to-day, who expects shortly to resign his pulpit to the Rev. Mr. That-to-morrow, together with the Rev. Mr. Bewilderment, the Rev. Mr. Clog-the-spirit, and, last and greatest, the Rev. Dr. Wind-of-doctrine. The labors of these eminent divines are aided by those of innumerable lecturers, who diffuse such a various profundity, in all subjects of human or celestial science, that any man may acquire an omnigenous<sup>50</sup> erudition without the trouble of even learning to read. Thus literature is etherealized by assuming for its medium the human voice; and knowledge, depositing all its heavier particles, except, doubtless, its gold, becomes exhaled into a sound, which forthwith steals into the ever-open ear of the community. These ingenious methods constitute a sort of machinery, by which thought and study are done to every person's hand without his putting himself to the slightest inconvenience in the matter. There is another species of machine for the wholesale manufacture of individual morality. This excellent result is effected by societies for all manner of virtuous purposes, with which a man has merely to connect himself, throwing, as it were, his quota of virtue into the common stock, and the president and directors will take care that the aggregate amount be well applied. All these, and other wonderful improvements in ethics, religion, and literature, being made plain to my comprehension by the ingenious Mr. Smooth-it-away, inspired me with a vast admiration of Vanity Fair.

It would fill a volume, in an age of pamphlets, were I to record all my observations in this great capital of human business and pleasure. There was an unlimited range of society—the powerful, the wise, the witty, and the famous in every walk of life, princes, presidents, poets, generals, artists, actors, and philanthropists,—all making their own market at the fair, and deeming no price too exorbitant for such com-

<sup>50</sup> Of all kinds.



modities as hit their fancy. It was well worth one's while, even if he had no idea of buying or selling, to loiter through the bazaars and observe the various sorts of traffic that were going forward.

Some of the purchasers, I thought, made very foolish bargains. For instance, a young man having inherited a splendid fortune, laid out a considerable portion of it in the purchase of diseases, and finally spent all the rest for a heavy lot of repentance and a suit of rags. A very pretty girl bartered a heart as clear as crystal, and which seemed her most valuable possession, for another jewel of the same kind, but so worn and defaced as to be utterly worthless. In one shop there were a great many crowns of laurel and myrtle, which soldiers, authors, statesmen, and various other people pressed eagerly to buy, some purchased these paltry wreaths with their lives, others by a toilsome servitude of years, and many sacrificed whatever was most valuable, yet finally slunk away without the crown. There was a sort of stock or scrip, called Conscience, which seemed to be in great demand, and would purchase almost anything. Indeed, few rich commodities were to be obtained without paying a heavy sum in this particular stock, and a man's business was seldom very lucrative unless he knew precisely when and how to throw his hoard of conscience into the market. Yet as this stock was the only thing of permanent value, whoever parted with it was sure to find himself a loser in the long run. Several of the speculations were of a questionable character. Occasionally a member of Congress recruited his pocket by the sale of his constituents; and I was assured that public officers have often sold their country at very moderate prices. Thousands sold their happiness for a whim. Gilded chains were in great demand, and purchased with almost any sacrifice. In truth, those who desired, according to the old adage, to sell anything valuable for a song, might find customers all over the Fair, and there were innumerable messes of pottage,<sup>51</sup> piping hot, for such as chose to buy them with their birthrights. A few articles, however, could not be found genuine at Vanity Fair. If a customer wished to renew his stock of youth the dealers offered him a set of false teeth and an auburn wig, if he demanded peace of mind, they recommended opium or a brandy bottle.

Tracts of land and golden mansions, situate in the

<sup>51</sup> See Genesis 25:29-34; Esau sold his birthright to Jacob for a mess of pottage.

Celestial City, were often exchanged, at very disadvantageous rates, for a few years' lease of small, dismal, inconvenient tenements in Vanity Fair. Prince Beelzebub himself took great interest in this sort of traffic, and sometimes condescended to meddle with smaller matters. I once had the pleasure to see him bargaining with a miser for his soul, which, after much ingenious skirmishing on both sides, his highness succeeded in obtaining at about the value of sixpence. The prince remarked with a smile, that he was a loser by the transaction.

Day after day, as I walked the streets of Vanity, my manners and deportment became more and more like those of the inhabitants. The place began to seem like home, the idea of pursuing my travels to the Celestial City was almost obliterated from my mind. I was reminded of it, however, by the sight of the same pair of simple pilgrims at whom we had laughed so heartily when Apollyon puffed smoke and steam into their faces at the commencement of our journey. There they stood amidst the densest bustle of Vanity, the dealers offering them their purple and fine linen and jewels, the men of wit and humor gibing at them, a pair of buxom ladies ogling them askance, while the benevolent Mr. Smooth-it-away whispered some of his wisdom at their elbows, and pointed to a newly-erected temple; but there were these worthy simpletons, making the scene look wild and monstrous, merely by their sturdy repudiation of all part in its business or pleasures.

One of them—his name was Stick-to-the-right—perceived in my face, I suppose, a species of sympathy and almost admiration, which, to my own great surprise, I could not help feeling for this pragmatic couple. It prompted him to address me.

"Sir," inquired he, with a sad, yet mild and kindly voice, "do you call yourself a pilgrim?"

"Yes," I replied, "my right to that appellation is indubitable. I am merely a sojourner here in Vanity Fair, being bound to the Celestial City by the new railroad."

"Alas, friend," rejoined Mr. Stick-to-the-right, "I do assure you, and beseech you to receive the truth of my words, that that whole concern is a bubble. You may travel on it all your lifetime, were you to live thousands of years, and yet never get beyond the limits of Vanity Fair. Yea, though you should deem yourself entering the gates of the blessed city, it will be nothing but a miserable delusion."

"The Lord of the Celestial City," began the other pilgrim, whose name was Mr Foot-it-to-heaven, "has refused, and will ever refuse, to grant an act of incorporation for this railroad, and unless that be obtained, no passenger can ever hope to enter his dominions. Wherefore every man who buys a ticket must lay his account with losing the purchase money, which is the value of his own soul."

"Poh, nonsense!" said Mr Smooth-it-away, taking my arm and leading me off, "these fellows ought to be indicted for a libel. If the law stood as it once did in *Vanity Fair* we should see them grinning through the iron bars of the prison window."

This incident made a considerable impression on my mind, and contributed with other circumstances to indispose me to a permanent residence in the city of *Vanity*, although, of course, I was not simple enough to give up my original plan of gliding along easily and commodiously by railroad. Still, I grew anxious to be gone. There was one strange thing that troubled me. Amid the occupations or amusements of the Fair, nothing was more common than for a person—whether at feast, theatre, or church, or trafficking for wealth and honors, or whatever he might be doing, and however unseasonable the interruption—suddenly to vanish like a soap bubble, and be never more seen of his fellows; and so accustomed were the latter to such little accidents that they went on with their business as quietly as if nothing had happened. But it was otherwise with me.

Finally, after a pretty long residence at the Fair, I resumed my journey towards the Celestial City, still with Mr Smooth-it-away at my side. At a short distance beyond the suburbs of *Vanity* we passed the ancient silver mine, of which Demas was the first discoverer, and which is now wrought to great advantage, supplying nearly all the coined currency of the world. A little further onward was the spot where Lot's wife had stood forever under the semblance of a pillar of salt.<sup>52</sup> Curious travellers have long since carried it away piecemeal. Had all regrets been punished as rigorously as this poor dame's were, my yearning for the relinquished delights of *Vanity Fair* might have produced a similar change in my own corporeal substance, and left me a warning to future pilgrims.

The next remarkable object was a large edifice, con-

structed of mossgrown stone, but in a modern and airy style of architecture. The engine came to a pause in its vicinity, with the usual tremendous shriek.

"This was formerly the castle of the redoubted giant Despair," observed Mr. Smooth-it-away, "but since his death Mr Flimsy-faith has repaired it, and keeps an excellent house of entertainment here. It is one of our stopping-places."

"It seems but slightly put together," remarked I, looking at the frail yet ponderous walls. "I do not envy Mr. Flimsy-faith his habitation. Some day it will thunder down upon the heads of the occupants."

"We shall escape at all events," said Mr. Smooth-it-away, "for Apollyon is putting on the steam again."

The road now plunged into a gorge of the Delectable Mountains, and traversed the field where in former ages the blind men wandered and stumbled among the tombs. One of these ancient tombstones had been thrust across the track by some malicious person, and gave the train of cars a terrible jolt. Far up the rugged side of a mountain I perceived a rusty iron door, half overgrown with bushes and creeping plants, but with smoke issuing from its crevices.

"Is that," inquired I, "the very door in the hill-side which the shepherds assured Christian was a by-way to hell?"

"That was a joke on the part of the shepherds," said Mr Smooth-it-away, with a smile. "It is neither more nor less than the door of a cavern which they use as a smoke-house for the preparation of mutton hams."

My recollections of the journey are now, for a little space, dim and confused, inasmuch as a singular drowsiness here overcame me, owing to the fact that we were passing over the enchanted ground, the air of which encourages a disposition to sleep. I awoke, however, as soon as we crossed the borders of the pleasant land of Beulah. All the passengers were rubbing their eyes, comparing watches, and congratulating one another on the prospect of arriving so seasonably at the journey's end. The sweet breezes of this happy clime came refreshingly to our nostrils; we beheld the glimmering gush of silver fountains, overhung by trees of beautiful foliage and delicious fruit, which were propagated by grafts from the celestial gardens. Once, as we dashed onward like a hurricane, there was a flutter of wings and the bright appearance of an angel in the air, speeding forth on some heavenly mission. The engine now announced the

<sup>52</sup> Lot's wife, unable to resist the temptation to look back at her burning home, was turned into a pillar of salt. See *Genesis* 19:26.

close vicinity of the final station-house by one last and horrible scream, in which there seemed to be distinguishable every kind of wailing and woe, and bitter fierceness of wrath, all mixed up with the wild laughter of a devil or a madman. Throughout our journey, at every stopping-place, Apollyon had exercised his ingenuity in screwing the most abominable sounds out of the whistle of the steam-engine, but in this closing effort he outdid himself and created an infernal uproar, which, besides disturbing the peaceful inhabitants of Beulah, must have sent its discord even through the celestial gates.

While the horrid clamor was still ringing in our ears we heard an exulting strain, as if a thousand instruments of music, with height and depth and sweetness in their tones, at once tender and triumphant, were struck in unison, to greet the approach of some illustrious hero, who had fought the good fight<sup>53</sup> and won a glorious victory, and was come to lay aside his battered arms forever. Looking to ascertain what might be the occasion of this glad harmony, I perceived, on alighting from the cars, that a multitude of shining ones had assembled on the other side of the river, to welcome two poor pilgrims, who were just emerging from its depths. They were the same whom Apollyon and ourselves had persecuted with taunts, and gibes, and scalding steam, at the commencement of our journey—the same whose unworldly aspect and impressive words had stirred my conscience amid the wild revellers of Vanity Fair.<sup>30</sup>

"How amazingly well those men have got on," cried I to Mr. Smooth-it-away. "I wish we were secure of as good a reception."

"Never fear, never fear!" answered my friend. "Come, make haste, the ferry boat will be off directly, and in three minutes you will be on the other side of the river. No doubt you will find coaches to carry you up to the city gates."

A steam ferry boat, the last improvement on this important route, lay at the river side, puffing, snorting, and emitting all those other disagreeable utterances which betoken the departure to be immediate. I hurried on board with the rest of the passengers, most of whom were in great perturbation some bawling

out for their baggage, some tearing their hair and exclaiming that the boat would explode or sink, some already pale with the heaving of the stream, some gazing affrighted at the ugly aspect of the steersman; and some still dizzy with the slumberous influences of the Enchanted Ground. Looking back to the shore, I was amazed to discern Mr. Smooth-it-away waving his hand in token of farewell.

"Don't you go over to the Celestial City?" exclaimed I.

"Oh, no!" answered he with a queer smile, and that same disagreeable contortion of visage which I had remarked in the inhabitants of the Dark Valley. "Oh, no! I have come thus far only for the sake of your pleasant company. Good-by! We shall meet again."

And then did my excellent friend Mr. Smooth-it-away laugh outright, in the midst of which cachinnation a smoke-wicath issued from his mouth and nostrils, while a twinkle of lurid flame darted out of either eye, proving indubitably that his heart was all of a red blaze. The impudent fiend! To deny the existence of Tophet, when he felt its fiery tortures raging within his breast. I rushed to the side of the boat, intending to fling myself on shore; but the wheels, as they began their revolutions, threw a dash of spray over me so cold—so deadly cold, with the chill that will never leave those waters until Death be drowned in his own river—that with a shiver and a heartquake I awoke. Thank Heaven it was a Dream! May, 1843

1846

#### *Earth's Holocaust*<sup>54</sup>

Once upon a time—but whether in the time past or time to come is a matter of little or no moment—this wide world had become so overburdened with an accumulation of worn-out trumpery that the inhabitants determined to rid themselves of it by a general bonfire. The site fixed upon at the representation of the insurance companies, and as being as central a spot as any other on the globe, was one of the broadest prairies of the West, where no human habitation would be endangered by the flames, and where a vast assemblage of spectators might commodiously admire

the same time that it turned into a forceful attack upon the theory of the natural goodness of man. The moral is that the enactment of laws, the changing of social institutions, and the destruction of all the outward symbols of evil will profit nothing unless the human heart first undergoes a complete reformation.

<sup>53</sup> For "fought the good fight," see II Timothy 4:7.

<sup>54</sup> This was published in *Graham's Magazine* in May, 1844. It had originated in Hawthorne's notation in his *American Note-Books* (p. 211) which reads, "A bonfire to be made of the gallows and all symbols of evil." This story grew under Hawthorne's hand into a spinted satire on reform movements, at the

the show. Having a taste for sights of this kind, and imagining, likewise, that the illumination of the bonfire might reveal some profundity of moral truth heretofore hidden in mist or darkness, I made it convenient to journey thither and be present. At my arrival, although the heap of condemned rubbish was as yet comparatively small, the torch had already been applied. Amid that boundless plain, in the dusk of the evening, like a far off star alone in the firmament, there was merely visible one tremulous gleam, whence none could have anticipated so fierce a blaze as was destined to ensue. With every moment, however, there came foot travellers, women holding up their aprons, men on horseback, wheel-barrows, lumbering baggage wagons, and other vehicles, great and small, and from far and near laden with articles that were judged fit for nothing but to be burned.

"What materials have been used to kindle the flame?" inquired I of a by-stander, for I was desirous of knowing the whole process of the affair from beginning to end.

The person whom I addressed was a grave man, fifty years old or thereabout, who had evidently come thither as a looker on. He struck me immediately as having weighed for himself the true value of life and its circumstances, and therefore as feeling little personal interest in whatever judgment the world might form of them. Before answering my question, he looked me in the face by the kindling light of the fire.

"Oh, some very dry combustibles," replied he, "and extremely suitable to the purpose—no other, in fact, than yesterday's newspapers, last month's magazines, and last year's withered leaves. Here now comes some antiquated trash that will take fire like a handful of shavings."

As he spoke some rough-looking men advanced to the verge of the bonfire, and threw in, as it appeared, all the rubbish of the herald's office—the blazonry of coat armor, the crests and devices of illustrious families, pedigrees that extended back, like lines of light, into the mist of the dark ages, together with stars, garters, and embroidered collars, each of which, as paltry a bawble as it might appear to the un instructed eye, had once possessed vast significance, and was still, in truth, reckoned among the most precious of moral or material facts by the worshippers of the gorgeous past. Mingled with this confused heap, which was tossed into the flames by armfuls at once, were innumerable badges of knighthood, comprising

those of all the European sovereignties, and Napoleon's decoration of the Legion of Honor, the ribbons of which were entangled with those of the ancient order of St. Louis. There, too, were the medals of our own society of Cincinnati, by means of which, as history tells us, an order of hereditary knights came near being constituted out of the king quellers of the revolution. And besides, there were the patents of nobility of German counts and barons, Spanish grandees, and English peers, from the worm-eaten instruments signed by William the Conqueror down to the brand new parchment of the latest lord who has received his honors from the fair hand of Victoria.

At sight of the dense volumes of smoke, mingled with vivid jets of flame, that gushed and eddied forth from this immense pile of earthly distinctions, the multitude of plebeian spectators set up a joyous shout, and clapped their hands with an emphasis that made the welkin echo. That was their moment of triumph, achieved, after long ages, over creatures of the same clay and the same spiritual infirmities, who had dared to assume the privileges due only to Heaven's better workmanship. But now there rushed towards the blazing heap a gray-haired man, of stately presence, wearing a coat, from the breast of which a star, or other badge of rank, seemed to have been forcibly wrenched away. He had not the tokens of intellectual power in his face, but still there was the demeanor, the habitual and almost native dignity, of one who had been born to the idea of his own social superiority, and had never felt it questioned till that moment.

"People," cried he, gazing at the ruin of what was dearest to his eyes with grief and wonder, but nevertheless with a degree of statelyness,—“people, what have you done? This fire is consuming all that marked your advance from barbarism, or that could have prevented your relapse thither. We, the men of the privileged orders, were those who kept alive from age to age the old chivalrous spirit; the gentle and generous thought; the higher, the purer, the more refined and delicate life. With the nobles, too, you cast off the poet, the painter, the sculptor—all the beautiful arts, for we were their patrons, and created the atmosphere in which they flourish. In abolishing the majestic distinctions of rank, society loses not only its grace, but its steadfastness”—

More he would doubtless have spoken; but here

there arose an outcry, sportive, contemptuous, and indignant, that altogether drowned the appeal of the fallen nobleman, insomuch that, casting one look of despair at his own half-burned pedigree, he shrunk back into the crowd, glad to shelter himself under his new-found insignificance.

"Let him thank his stars that we have not flung him into the same fire!" shouted a rude figure, spurning the embers with his foot. "And henceforth let no man dare to show a piece of musty parchment as his warrant for lording it over his fellows. If he have strength of arm, well and good, it is one species of superiority. If he have wit, wisdom, courage, force of character, let these attributes do for him what they may; but from this day forward no mortal must hope for place and consideration by reckoning up the mouldy bones of his ancestors. That nonsense is done away."

"And in good time," remarked the grave observer by my side, in a low voice, however, "if no worse nonsense comes in its place, but, at all events, this species of nonsense has fairly lived out its life."

There was little space to muse or moralize over the embers of this time-honored rubbish, for, before it was half burned out, there came another multitude from beyond the sea, bearing the purple robes of royalty, and the crowns, globes, and sceptres of emperors and kings. All these had been condemned as useless bawbles, playthings at best, fit only for the infancy of the world or rods to govern and chastise it in its nonage, but with which universal manhood at its full-grown stature could no longer brook to be insulted. Into such contempt had these regal insignia now fallen that the gilded crown and tinselled robes of the player king from Drury Lane Theatre had been thrown in among the rest, doubtless as a mockery of his brother monarchs on the great stage of the world. It was a strange sight to discern the crown jewels of England glowing and flashing in the midst of the fire. Some of them had been delivered down from the time of the Saxon princes; others were purchased with vast revenues, or perchance ravished from the dead brows of the native potentates of Hindostan; and the whole now blazed with a dazzling lustre, as if a star had fallen in that spot and been shattered into fragments. The splendor of the ruined monarchy had no reflection save in those inestimable precious stones. But enough on this subject. It were but tedious to describe how the Emperor of Austria's mantle was

converted to tinder, and how the posts and pillars of the French throne became a heap of coals, which it was impossible to distinguish from those of any other wood. Let me add, however, that I noticed one of the exiled Poles stirring up the bonfire with the Czar of Russia's sceptre, which he afterwards flung into the flames.

"The smell of singed garments is quite intolerable here," observed my new acquaintance, as the breeze enveloped us in the smoke of a royal wardrobe. "Let us get to windward and see what they are doing on the other side of the bonfire."

We accordingly passed around, and were just in time to witness the arrival of a vast procession of Washingtonians,—as the votaries of temperance call themselves nowadays,—accompanied by thousands of the Irish disciples of Father Mathew, with that great apostle at their head. They brought a rich contribution to the bonfire—being nothing less than all the hogsheads and barrels of liquor in the world, which they rolled before them across the prairie.

"Now, my children," cried Father Mathew, when they reached the verge of the fire, "one shove more, and the work is done. And now let us stand off and see Satan deal with his own liquor."

Accordingly, having placed their wooden vessels within reach of the flames, the procession stood off at a safe distance, and soon beheld them burst into a blaze that reached the clouds and threatened to set the sky itself on fire. And well it might; for here was the whole world's stock of spirituous liquors, which, instead of kindling a frenzied light in the eyes of individual toppers as of yore, soared upwards with a bewildering gleam that startled all mankind. It was the aggregate of that fierce fire which would otherwise have scorched the hearts of millions. Meantime numberless bottles of precious wine were flung into the blaze, which lapped up the contents as if it loved them, and grew, like other drunkards, the merrier and fiercer for what it quaffed. Never again will the insatiable thirst of the fire fiend be so pampered. Here were the treasures of famous bon vivants—liquors that had been tossed on ocean, and mellowed in the sun, and hoarded long in the recesses of the earth—the pale, the gold, the ruddy juice of whatever vineyards were most delicate—the entire vintage of Tokay—all mingling in one stream with the vile fluids of the common pothouse, and contributing to heighten the selfsame blaze. And while it rose in a gigantic

spire that seemed to wave against the aich of the firmament and combine itself with the light of stars, the multitude gave a shout as if the broad earth were exulting in its deliverance from the curse of ages

But the joy was not universal. Many deemed that human life would be gloomier than ever when that brief illumination should sink down. While the reformers were at work, I overheard muttered expostulations from several respectable gentlemen with red 10 noses and wearing gouty shoes, and a ragged worthy, whose face looked like a hearth where the fire is burned out, now expressed his discontent more openly and boldly

"What is this world good for," said the last toper, "now that we can never be jolly any more? What is to comfort the poor man in sorrow and perplexity? How is he to keep his heart warm against the cold winds of this cheerless earth? And what do you propose to give him in exchange for the solace that you 20 take away? How are old friends to sit together by the fireside without a cheerful glass between them? A plague upon your reformation! It is a sad world, a cold world, a selfish world, a low world, not worth an honest fellow's living in, now that good fellowship is gone forever!"

This harangue excited great mirth among the bystanders; but, preposterous as was the sentiment, I could not help commiserating the forlorn condition of the last toper, whose boon companions had 30 dwindled away from his side, leaving the poor fellow without a soul to countenance him in sipping his liquor, nor indeed any liquor to sip. Not that this was quite the true state of the case, for I had observed him at a critical moment filch a bottle of fourth-proof brandy that fell beside the bonfire and hide it in his pocket.

The spirituous and fermented liquors being thus disposed of, the zeal of the reformers next induced them to replenish the fire with all the boxes of tea 40 and bags of coffee in the world. And now came the planters of Virginia, bringing their crops and tobacco. These, being cast upon the heap of inutility, aggregated it to the size of a mountain, and incensed the atmosphere with such potent fragrance that methought we should never draw pure breath again. The present sacrifice seemed to startle the lovers of the weed more than any that they had hitherto witnessed.

"Well, they've put my pipe out," said an old gentleman, flinging it into the flames in a pet. "What is this world coming to? Everything rich and racy—all the spice of life—is to be condemned as useless. Now that they have kindled the bonfire, if these nonsensical reformers would fling themselves into it, all would be well enough!"

"Be patient," responded a stanch conservative, "it will come to that in the end. They will first fling us in, and finally themselves."

From the general and systematic measures of reform I now turned to consider the individual contributions to this memorable bonfire. In many instances these were of a very amusing character. One poor fellow threw in his empty purse, and another a bundle of counterfeit or unsolvable bank notes. Fashionable ladies threw in their last season's bonnets, together with heaps of ribbons, yellow lace, and much other half-worn milliner's ware, all of which proved 20 even more evanescent in the fire than it had been in the fashion. A multitude of lovers of both sexes—discarded maids or bachelors and couples mutually weary of one another—tossed in bundles of perfumed letters and enamored sonnets. A hack politician, being deprived of bread by the loss of office, threw in his teeth, which happened to be false ones. The Rev. Sydney Smith—having voyaged across the Atlantic for that sole purpose—came up to the bonfire with a bitter grin and threw in certain repudiated bonds, 30 fortified though they were with the broad seal of a sovereign state. A little boy of five years old, in the premature manliness of the present epoch, threw in his playthings, a college graduate his diploma, an apothecary, ruined by the spread of homœopathy, his whole stock of drugs and medicines; a physician his library, a parson his old sermons; and a fine gentleman of the old school his code of manners, which he had formerly written down for the benefit of the next generation. A widow, resolving on a second marriage, 40 slyly threw in her dead husband's miniature. A young man, jilted by his mistress, would willingly have flung his own desperate heart into the flames, but could find no means to wrench it out of his bosom. An American author, whose works were neglected by the public, threw his pen and paper into the bonfire, and betook himself to some less discouraging occupation. It somewhat startled me to overhear a number of ladies, highly respectable in appearance, proposing to fling their gowns and petticoats into the flames, and

assume the garb, together with the manners, duties, offices, and responsibilities, of the opposite sex

What favor was accorded to this scheme I am unable to say, my attention being suddenly drawn to a poor, deceived, and half-delirious girl, who, exclaiming that she was the most worthless thing alive or dead, attempted to cast herself into the fire amid all that wicked and broken tumpetry of the world. A good man, however, ran to her rescue

"Patience, my poor girl!" said he, as he drew her back from the fierce embrace of the destroying angel. "Be patient, and abide Heaven's will. So long as you possess a living soul, all may be restored to its first freshness. These things of matter and creations of human fantasy are fit for nothing but to be burned when once they have had their day; but your day is eternity!"

"Yes," said the wretched girl, whose frenzy seemed now to have sunk down into deep despondency,— "yes and the sunshine is blotted out of it!"

It was now rumored among the spectators that all the weapons and munitions of war were to be thrown into the bonfire, with the exception of the world's stock of gunpowder, which, as the safest mode of disposing of it, had already been drowned in the sea. This intelligence seemed to awaken great diversity of opinion. The hopeful philanthropist esteemed it a token that the millennium was already come; while persons of another stamp, in whose view mankind was a breed of bulldogs, prophesied that all the old stoutness, fervor, nobleness, generosity, and magnanimity of the race would disappear,—these qualities, as they affirmed, requiring blood for their nourishment. They comforted themselves, however, in the belief that the proposed abolition of war was impracticable for any length of time together.

Be that as it might, numberless great guns, whose thunder had long been the voice of battle,—the artillery of the Armada, the battering trains of Marlborough, and the adverse cannon of Napoleon and Wellington,—were trundled into the midst of the fire. By the continual addition of dry combustibles, it had now waxed so intense that neither brass nor iron could withstand it. It was wonderful to behold how these terrible instruments of slaughter melted away like playthings of wax. Then the armies of the earth wheeled around the mighty furnace, with their military music playing triumphant marches, and flung in their muskets and swords. The standard-bearers, like-

wise, cast one look upward at their banners, all tattered with shot holes and inscribed with the names of victorious fields, and, giving them a last flourish on the biceze, they lowered them into the flame, which snatched them upward in its rush towards the clouds. This ceremony being over, the world was left without a single weapon in its hands, except possibly a few old king's arms and rusty swords and other trophies of the Revolution in some of our state armories. And now the drums were beaten and the trumpets blayed all together, as a prelude to the proclamation of universal and eternal peace and the announcement that glory was no longer to be won by blood, but that it would henceforth be the contention of the human race to work out the greatest mutual good, and that beneficence, in the future annals of the earth, would claim the praise of valor. The blessed tidings were accordingly promulgated, and caused infinite rejoicings among those who had stood aghast at the horror and absurdity of war

But I saw a grim smile pass over the seared visage of a stately old commander,—by his warworn figure and rich military dress, he might have been one of Napoleon's famous marshals,—who, with the rest of the world's soldiery, had just flung away the sword that had been familiar to his right hand for half a century

"Ay! ay!" grumbled he "Let them proclaim what they please, but, in the end, we shall find that all this foolery has only made more work for the armorers and cannon founders."

"Why, sir," exclaimed I, in astonishment, "do you imagine that the human race will ever so far return on the steps of its past madness as to weld another sword or cast another cannon?"

"There will be no need," observed, with a sneer, one who neither felt benevolence nor had faith in it "When Cain wished to slay his brother, he was at no loss for a weapon."

"We shall see," replied the veteran commander. "If I am mistaken, so much the better; but in my opinion, without pretending to philosophize about the matter, the necessity of war lies far deeper than these honest gentlemen suppose. What! is there a field for all the petty disputes of individuals? and shall there be no great law court for the settlement of national difficulties? The battle field is the only court where such suits can be tried."

"You forget, general," rejoined I, "that, in this

advanced stage of civilization, Reason and Philanthropy combined will constitute just such a tribunal as is requisite "

"Ah, I had forgotten that, indeed!" said the old warrior, as he limped away

The fire was now to be replenished with materials that had hitherto been considered of even greater importance to the well being of society than the warlike munitions which we had already seen consumed. A body of reformers had travelled all over the earth in quest of the machinery by which the different nations were accustomed to inflict the punishment of death. A shudder passed through the multitude as these ghastly emblems were dragged forward. Even the flames seemed at first to shrink away, displaying the shape and murderous contrivance of each in a full blaze of light, which of itself was sufficient to convince mankind of the long and deadly error of human law. Those old implements of cruelty, those horrible monsters of mechanism; those inventions, 20 which seemed to demand something worse than man's natural heart to contrive, and which had lurked in the dusky nooks of ancient prisons, the subject of terror-stricken legend,—were now brought forth to view. Headsmen's axes, with the rust of noble and royal blood upon them, and a vast collection of halters that had choked the breath of plebeian victims, were thrown in together. A shout greeted the arrival of the guillotine, which was thrust forward on the same wheels that had borne it from one to 30 another of the blood-stained streets of Paris. But the loudest roar of applause went up, telling the distant sky of the triumph of the earth's redemption, when the gallows made its appearance. An ill-looking fellow, however, rushed forward, and, putting himself in the path of the reformers, bellowed hoarsely, and fought with brute fury to stay their progress.

It was little matter of surprise, perhaps, that the executioner should thus do his best to vindicate and uphold the machinery by which he himself had his 40 livelihood and worthier individuals their death; but it deserved special note that men of a far different sphere—even of that consecrated class in whose guardianship the world is apt to trust its benevolence—were found to take the hangman's view of the question.

"Stay, my brethren!" cried one of them. "You are misled by a false philanthropy; you know not what you do. The gallows is a Heaven-ordained instrument.

Bear it back, then, reverently, and set it up in its old place, else the world will fall to speedy ruin and desolation!"

"Onward! onward!" shouted a leader in the reform. "Into the flames with the accursed instrument of man's blood policy! How can human law inculcate benevolence and love while it persists in setting up the gallows as its chief symbol? One heave more, good friends, and the world will be redeemed from its greatest error."

A thousand hands, that nevertheless loathed the touch, now lent their assistance and thrust the ominous burden far, far into the centre of the raging furnace. There its fatal and abhorred image was beheld, first black, then a red coal, then ashes.

"That was well done!" exclaimed I.

"Yes, it was well done," replied, but with less enthusiasm than I expected, the thoughtful observer who was still at my side; "well done, if the world be good enough for the measure. Death, however, is an idea that cannot easily be dispensed with in any condition between the primal innocence and that other puny and perfection which perchance we are destined to attain after travelling round the full circle; but, at all events, it is well that the experiment should now be tried."

"Too cold! too cold!" impatiently exclaimed the young and ardent leader in this triumph. "Let the heart have its voice here as well as the intellect. And as for ripeness, and as for progress, let mankind always do the highest, kindest, noblest thing that, at any given period, it has attained the perception of, and surely that thing cannot be wrong nor wrongly timed."

I know not whether it were the excitement of the scene, or whether the good people around the bonfire were really growing more enlightened every instant; but they now proceeded to measures in the full length of which I was hardly prepared to keep them company. For instance, some threw their marriage certificates into the flames, and declared themselves candidates for a higher, holier, and more comprehensive union than that which had subsisted from the birth of time under the form of the connubial tie. Others hastened to the vaults of banks and to the coffer of the rich,—all of which were open to the first comer on this fated occasion,—and brought entire bales of paper money to enliven the blaze, and tons of coin to be melted down by its intensity. Henceforth, they



said, universal benevolence, uncoined and exhaustless, was to be the golden currency of the world. At this intelligence the bankers and speculators in the stocks grew pale, and a pickpocket, who had reaped a rich harvest among the crowd, fell down in a deadly fainting fit. A few men of business burned their daybooks and ledgers, the notes and obligations of their creditors, and all other evidences of debts due to themselves; while perhaps a somewhat larger number satisfied their zeal for reform with the sacrifice of any 10 uncomfortable recollection of their own indebtedness. There was then a cry that the period was arrived when the title deeds of landed property should be given to the flames, and the whole soil of the earth revert to the public, from whom it had been wrongfully abstracted and most unequally distributed among individuals. Another party demanded that all written constitutions, set forms of government, legislative acts, statute books, and everything else on which human invention had endeavored to stamp its 20 arbitrary laws, should at once be destroyed, leaving the consummated world as free as the man first created.

Whether any ultimate action was taken with regard to these propositions is beyond my knowledge, for, just then, some matters were in progress that concerned my sympathies more nearly.

"See! see! What heaps of books and pamphlets!" cried a fellow, who did not seem to be a lover of literature. "Now we shall have a glorious blaze!" 30

"That's just the thing!" said a modern philosopher. "Now we shall get rid of the weight of dead men's thought, which has hitherto pressed so heavily on the living intellect that it has been incompetent to any effectual self-exertion. Well done, my lads! Into the fire with them! Now you are enlightening the world indeed!"

"But what is to become of the trade?" cried a frantic bookseller.

"Oh, by all means, let them accompany their merchandise," coolly observed an author. "It will be a noble funeral pile!"

The truth was, that the human race had now reached a stage of progress so far beyond what the wisest and wittiest men of former ages had ever dreamed of that it would have been a manifest absurdity to allow the earth to be any longer encumbered with their poor achievements in the literary line. Accordingly a thorough and searching investiga-

tion had swept the booksellers' shops, hawkers' stands, public, and private libraries, and even the little bookshelf by the country fireside, and had brought the world's entire mass of printed paper, bound or in sheets, to swell the already mountain bulk of our illustrious bonfire. Thick, heavy folios, containing the labors of lexicographers, commentators and encyclopedists, were flung in, and falling among the embers with a leaden thump, smouldered away to ashes like rotten wood. The small, richly gilt French tomes of the last age, with the hundred volumes of Voltaire among them, went off in a brilliant shower of sparkles and little jets of flame, while the current literature of the same nation burned red and blue, and threw an infernal light over the visages of the spectators, converting them all to the aspect of party-colored fiends. A collection of German stories emitted a scent of brimstone. The English standard authors made excellent fuel, generally exhibiting the properties of sound oak logs. Milton's works, in particular, sent up a powerful blaze, gradually reddening into a coal, which promised to endure longer than almost any other material of the pile. From Shakespeare there gushed a flame of such marvellous splendor that men shaded their eyes as against the sun's meridian glory, nor even when the works of his own elucidators were flung upon him did he cease to flash forth a dazzling radiance from beneath the ponderous heap. It is my belief that he is blazing as fervidly as ever.

"Could a poet but light a lamp at that glorious flame," remarked I, "he might then consume the midnight oil to some good purpose."

"That is the very thing which modern poets have been too apt to do, or at least to attempt," answered a critic. "The chief benefit to be expected from this conflagration of past literature undoubtedly is, that writers will henceforth be compelled to light their lamps at the sun or stars."

"If they can reach so high," said I; "but that task requires a giant, who may afterwards distribute the light among inferior men. It is not every one that can steal the fire from heaven like Prometheus; but, when once he had done the deed, a thousand hearths were kindled by it."

It amazed me much to observe how indefinite was the proportion between the physical mass of any given author and the property of brilliant and long-continued combustion. For instance, there was not a quarto volume of the last century—nor, indeed, of

the present—that could compete in that particular with a child's little gilt-covered book, containing Mother Goose's Melodies. The Life and Death of Tom Thumb outlasted the biography of Marlborough. An epic, indeed a dozen of them, was converted to white ashes before the single sheet of an old ballad was half consumed. In more than one case, too, when volumes of applauded verse proved incapable of anything better than a stifling smoke, an unregarded ditty of some nameless bard—perchance in the corner of a newspaper—soared up among the stars with a flame as brilliant as their own. Speaking of the properties of flame, methought Shelley's poetry emitted a purer light than almost any other productions of his day, contrasting beautifully with the fitful and lurid gleams and gushes of black vapor that flashed and eddied from the volumes of Lord Byron. As for Tom Moore, some of his songs diffused an odor like a burning pastil.

I felt particular interest in watching the combustion of American authors, and scrupulously noted by my watch the precise number of moments that changed most of them from shabbily-printed books to indistinguishable ashes. It would be invidious, however, if not perilous, to betray these awful secrets, so that I shall content myself with observing that it was not invariably the writer most frequent in the public mouth that made the most splendid appearance in the bonfire. I especially remember that a great deal of excellent inflammability was exhibited in a thin volume of poems by Ellery Channing, although, to speak the truth, there were certain portions that hissed and spluttered in a very disagreeable fashion. A curious phenomenon occurred in reference to several writers, native as well as foreign. Their books, though of highly respectable figure, instead of bursting into a blaze, or even smouldering out their substance in smoke, suddenly melted away in a manner that proved them to be ice.

If it be no lack of modesty to mention my own works, it must here be confessed that I looked for them with fatherly interest, but in vain. Too probably they were changed to vapor by the first action of the heat; at best, I can only hope that, in their quiet way, they contributed a glimmering spark or two to the splendor of the evening.

"Alas! and woe is me!" thus bemoaned himself a heavy-looking gentleman in green spectacles. "The world is utterly ruined, and there is nothing to live

for any longer. The business of my life is snatched from me. Not a volume to be had for love or money!"

"This," remarked the sedate observer beside me, "is a bookworm—one of those men who are born to gnaw dead thoughts. His clothes, you see, are covered with the dust of libraries. He has no inward fountain of ideas, and, in good earnest, now that the old stock is abolished, I do not see what is to become of the poor fellow. Have you no word of comfort for him?"

"My dear sir," said I to the desperate bookworm, "is not Nature better than a book? Is not the human heart deeper than any system of philosophy? Is not life replete with more instruction than past observers have found it possible to write down in maxims? Be of good cheer. The great book of Time is still spread wide open before us, and, if we read it aright, it will be to us a volume of eternal truth."

"Oh, my books, my books, my precious printed books!" reiterated the forlorn bookworm. "My only reality was a bound volume, and now they will not leave me even a shadowy pamphlet!"

In fact, the last remnant of the literature of all the ages was now descending upon the blazing heap in the shape of a cloud of pamphlets from the press of the New World. These likewise were consumed in the twinkling of an eye, leaving the earth, for the first time since the days of Cadmus, free from the plague of letters—an enviable field for the authors of the next generation.

"Well, and does anything remain to be done?" inquired I somewhat anxiously. "Unless we set fire to the earth itself, and then leap boldly off into infinite space, I know not that we can carry reform to any farther point."

"You are vastly mistaken, my good friend," said the observer. "Believe me, the fire will not be allowed to settle down without the addition of fuel that will startle many persons who have lent a willing hand thus far."

Nevertheless there appeared to be a relaxation of effort for a little time, during which, probably, the leaders of the movement were considering what should be done next. In the interval, a philosopher threw his theory into the flames,—a sacrifice which, by those who knew how to estimate it, was pronounced the most remarkable that had yet been made. The combustion, however, was by no means

brilliant Some indefatigable people, scorning to take a moment's ease, now employed themselves in collecting all the withered leaves and fallen boughs of the forest, and thereby recruited the bonfire to a greater height than ever. But this was mere by-play.

"Here comes the fresh fuel that I spoke of," said my companion.

To my astonishment, the persons who now advanced into the vacant space around the mountain fire bore surplices and other priestly garments, mitres, 10 crosiers, and a confusion of Popish and Protestant emblems, with which it seemed their purpose to consummate the great act of faith. Crosses from the spires of old cathedrals were cast upon the heap with as little remorse as if the reverence of centuries, passing in long array beneath the lofty towers, had not looked up to them as the holiest of symbols. The font in which infants were consecrated to God, the sacramental vessels whence piety received the hallowed draught, were given to the same destruction. Perhaps 20 it most nearly touched my heart to see among these devoted relics fragments of the humble communion tables and undecorated pulpits which I recognized as having been torn from the meeting-houses of New England. Those simple edifices might have been permitted to retain all of sacred embellishment that their Puritan founders had bestowed, even though the mighty structure of St. Peter's had sent its spoils to the fire of this terrible sacrifice. Yet I felt that these were but the externals of religion, and might most 30 safely be relinquished by spirits that best knew their deep significance.

"All is well," said I, cheerfully. "The woodpaths shall be the aisles of our cathedral,—the firmament itself shall be its ceiling. What needs an earthly roof between the Deity and his worshippers? Our faith can well afford to lose all the drapery that even the holiest men have thrown around it, and be only the more sublime in its simplicity."

"True," said my companion; "but will they pause 40 here?"

The doubt implied in his question was well founded. In the general destruction of books already described, a holy volume, that stood apart from the catalogue of human literature, and yet, in one sense, was at its head, had been spared. But the Titan of innovation,—angel or fiend, double in his nature, and capable of deeds befitting both characters,—at first shaking down only the old and rotten shapes of

things, had now, as it appeared, laid his terrible hand upon the main pillars which supported the whole edifice of our moral and spiritual state. The inhabitants of the earth had grown too enlightened to define their faith within a form of words, or to limit the spiritual by any analogy to our material existence. Truths which the heavens trembled at were now but a fable of the world's infancy. Therefore, as the final sacrifice of human error, what else remained to be thrown upon the embers of that awful pile except the book which, though a celestial revelation to past ages, was but a voice from a lower sphere as regarded the present race of man? It was done! Upon the blazing heap of falsehood and worn-out truth—things that the earth had never needed, or had ceased to need, or had grown childishly weary of—fell the ponderous church Bible, the great old volume that had lain so long on the cushion of the pulpit, and whence the pastor's solemn voice had given holy utterance on so many a Sabbath day. There, likewise, fell the family Bible, which the long-buried patriarch had read to his children,—in prosperity or sorrow, by the fireside and in the summer shade of trees,—and had bequeathed downward as the heirloom of generations. There fell the bosom Bible, the little volume that had been the soul's friend of some sorely-tried child of dust, who thence took courage, whether his trial were for life or death, steadfastly confronting both in the strong assurance of immortality.

All these were flung into the fierce and riotous blaze, and then a mighty wind came roaring across the plain with a desolate howl, as if it were the angry lamentation of the earth for the loss of heaven's sunshine, and it shook the gigantic pyramid of flame and scattered the cinders of half-consumed abominations around upon the spectators.

"This is terrible!" said I, feeling that my cheek grew pale, and seeing a like change in the visages about me.

"Be of good courage yet," answered the man with whom I had so often spoken. He continued to gaze steadily at the spectacle with a singular calmness, as if it concerned him merely as an observer. "Be of good courage, nor yet exult too much; for there is far less both of good and evil in the effect of this bonfire than the world might be willing to believe."

"How can that be?" exclaimed I, impatiently. "Has it not consumed everything? Has it not swallowed up or melted down every human or divine appendage of

our mortal state that had substance enough to be acted on by fire? Will there be anything left us to-morrow morning better or worse than a heap of embers and ashes?"

"Assuredly there will," said my grave friend "Come hither to-morrow morning, or whenever the combustible portion of the pile shall be quite burned out, and you will find among the ashes everything really valuable that you have seen cast into the flames. Trust me, the world of to-morrow will again enrich 10 itself with the gold and diamonds which have been cast off by the world of to-day. Not a truth is destroyed nor buried so deep among the ashes but it will be raked up at last."

This was a strange assurance. Yet I felt inclined to credit it, the more especially as I beheld among the wallowing flames a copy of the Holy Scriptures, the pages of which, instead of being blackened into tinder, only assumed a more dazzling whiteness as the finger marks of human imperfection were purified 20 away. Certain marginal notes and commentaries, it is true, yielded to the intensity of the fiery test, but without detriment to the smallest syllable that had flamed from the pen of inspiration.

"Yes, there is the proof of what you say," answered I, turning to the observer, "but if only what is evil can feel the action of the fire, then, surely, the conflagration has been of inestimable utility. Yet, if I understand aright, you intimate a doubt whether the world's expectation of benefit would be realized by 30 it."

"Listen to the talk of these worthies," said he, pointing to a group in front of the blazing pile, "possibly they may teach you something useful without intending it."

The persons whom he indicated consisted of that brutal and most earthy figure who had stood forth so furiously in defence of the gallows,—the hangman, in short,—together with the last thief and the last murderer, all three of whom were clustered about the last 40 toper. The latter was liberally passing the brandy bottle, which he had rescued from the general destruction of wines and spirits. This little convivial party seemed at the lowest pitch of despondency, as considering that the purified world must needs be utterly unlike the sphere that they had hitherto known, and therefore but a strange and desolate abode for gentlemen of their kidney.

"The best counsel for all of us is," remarked the

hangman, "that, as soon as we have finished the last drop of liquor, I help you, my three friends, to a comfortable end upon the nearest tree, and then hang myself on the same bough. This is no world for us any longer."

"Poh, poh, my good fellows!" said a dark-complexioned personage, who now joined the group,—his complexion was indeed fearfully dark, and his eyes glowed with a redder light than that of the bonfire, "be not so cast down, my dear friends, you shall see good days yet. There's one thing that these wisecracks have forgotten to throw into the fire, and without which all the rest of the conflagration is just nothing at all; yes, though they had burned the earth itself to a cinder."

"And what may that be?" eagerly demanded the last murderer.

"What but the human heart itself?" said the dark-visaged stranger, with a portentous grin. "And, unless they hit upon some method of purifying that foul cavern, forth from it will reissue all the shapes of wrong and misery—the same old shapes or worse ones—which they have taken such a vast deal of trouble to consume to ashes. I have stood by this livelong night and laughed in my sleeve at the whole business. Oh, take my word for it, it will be the old world yet!"

This brief conversation supplied me with a theme for lengthened thought. How sad a truth, if true it were, that man's age-long endeavor for perfection had served only to render him the mockery of the evil principle, from the fatal circumstance of an error at the very root of the matter! The heart, the heart,—there was the little yet boundless sphere wherein existed the original wrong of which the crime and misery of this outward world were merely types. Purify that inward sphere, and the many shapes of evil that haunt the outward, and which now seem almost our only realities, will turn to shadowy phantoms and vanish of their own accord; but if we go no deeper than the intellect, and strive, with merely that feeble instrument, to discern and rectify what is wrong, our whole accomplishment will be a dream, so unsubstantial that it matters little whether the bonfire, which I have so faithfully described, were what we choose to call a real event and a flame that would scorch the finger, or only a phosphoric radiance and a parable of my own brain.

May, 1844

*Rappaccini's Daughter* <sup>55</sup>

A young man, named Giovanni Guasconti, came, very long ago, from the more southern region of Italy, to pursue his studies at the University of Padua. Giovanni, who had but a scanty supply of gold ducats in his pocket, took lodgings in a high and gloomy chamber of an old edifice which looked not unworthy to have been the palace of a Paduan noble, and which, in fact, exhibited over its entrance the armorial bearings of a family long since extinct. The young stranger, who was not unstudied in the great poem of his country, recollected that one of the ancestors of this family, and perhaps an occupant of this very mansion, had been pictured by Dante as a partaker of the immortal agonies of his *Inferno*. These reminiscences and associations, together with the tendency to heartbreak natural to a young man for the first time out of his native sphere, caused Giovanni to sigh heavily as he looked around the desolate and ill-furnished apartment.

"Holy Virgin, signor!" cried old Dame Lisabetta, who, won by the youth's remarkable beauty of person, was kindly endeavouring to give the chamber a habitable air, "what a sigh was that to come out of a young man's heart! Do you find this old mansion gloomy? For the love of Heaven, then, put your head out of the window, and you will see as bright sunshine as you have left in Naples."

Guasconti mechanically did as the old woman advised, but could not quite agree with her that the Paduan sunshine was as cheerful as that of southern Italy. Such as it was, however, it fell upon a garden beneath the window and expended its fostering influences on a variety of plants, which seemed to have been cultivated with exceeding care.

"Does this garden belong to the house?" asked Giovanni.

"Heaven forbid, signor, unless it were fruitful of better pot herbs than any that grow there now," answered old Lisabetta. "No; that garden is cultivated by the own hands of Signor Giacomo Rappaccini, the famous doctor, who, I warrant him, has been heard of as far as Naples. It is said that he distils these plants into medicines that are as potent as a charm. Oftentimes you may see the signor doctor at work, and perchance the signora, his daughter, too, gath-

ering the strange flowers that grow in the garden."

The old woman had now done what she could for the aspect of the chamber, and, commending the young man to the protection of the saints, took her departure.

Giovanni still found no better occupation than to look down into the garden beneath his window. From its appearance, he judged it to be one of those botanic gardens which were of earlier date in Padua than elsewhere in Italy or in the world. Or, not improbably, it might once have been the pleasure-place of an opulent family, for there was the ruin of a marble fountain, in the centre, sculptured with rare art, but so wofully shattered that it was impossible to trace the original design from the chaos of remaining fragments. The water, however, continued to gush and sparkle into the sunbeams as cheerfully as ever. A little gurgling sound ascended to the young man's window, and made him feel as if the fountain were an immortal spirit that sung its song unceasingly and without heeding the vicissitudes around it, while one century embodied it in marble and another scattered the perishable garniture on the soil. All about the pool into which the water subsided grew various plants, that seemed to require a plentiful supply of moisture for the nourishment of gigantic leaves, and, in some instances, flowers gorgeously magnificent. There was one shrub in particular, set in a marble vase in the midst of the pool, that bore a profusion of purple blossoms, each of which had the lustre and richness of a gem, and the whole together made a show so resplendent that it seemed enough to illuminate the garden, even had there been no sunshine. Every portion of the soil was peopled with plants and herbs, which, if less beautiful, still bore tokens of assiduous care, as if all had their individual virtues, known to the scientific mind that fostered them. Some were placed in urns, rich with old carving, and others in common garden pots, some crept serpent-like along the ground or climbed on high, using whatever means of ascent was offered them. One plant had wreathed itself round a statue of Vertumnus, which was thus quite veiled and shrouded in a drapery of hanging foliage, so happily arranged that it might have served a sculptor for a study.

While Giovanni stood at the window he heard a rustling behind a screen of leaves, and became aware that a person was at work in the garden. His figure

<sup>55</sup> This story was published in the *Democratic Review* in December, 1844.

soon emerged into view, and showed itself to be that of no common laborer, but a tall, emaciated, sallow, and sickly-looking man, dressed in a scholar's garb of black. He was beyond the middle term of life, with gray hair, a thin, gray beard, and a face singularly marked with intellect and cultivation, but which could never, even in his more youthful days, have expressed much warmth of heart.

Nothing could exceed the intentness with which this scientific gardener examined every shrub which grew in his path: it seemed as if he was looking into their inmost nature, making observations in regard to their creative essence, and discovering why one leaf grew in this shape and another in that, and wherefore such and such flowers differed among themselves in hue and perfume. Nevertheless, in spite of this deep intelligence on his part, there was no approach to intimacy between himself and these vegetable existences. On the contrary, he avoided their actual touch or the direct inhaling of their odors with a caution that impressed Giovanni most disagreeably, for the man's demeanor was that of one walking among malignant influences, such as savage beasts, or deadly snakes, or evil spirits, which, should he allow them one moment of license, would wreak upon him some terrible fatality. It was strangely frightful to the young man's imagination to see this air of insecurity in a person cultivating a garden, that most simple and innocent of human toils, and which had been alike the joy and labor of the unfallen parents of the race. Was this garden, then, the Eden of the present world? And this man, with such a perception of harm in what his own hands caused to grow,—was he the Adam?

The distrustful gardener, while plucking away the dead leaves or pruning the too luxuriant growth of the shrubs, defended his hands with a pair of thick gloves. Nor were these his only armor. When, in his walk through the garden, he came to the magnificent plant that hung its purple gems beside the marble fountain, he placed a kind of mask over his mouth and nostrils, as if all this beauty did but conceal a deadlier malice; but, finding his task still too dangerous, he drew back, removed the mask, and called loudly, but in the infirm voice of a person affected with inward disease,—“Beatrice! Beatrice!”

“Here am I, my father. What would you?” cried a rich and youthful voice from the window of the opposite house—a voice as rich as a tropical sunset,

and which made Giovanni, though he knew not why, think of deep hues of purple or crimson and of perfumes heavily delectable. “Are you in the garden?”

“Yes, Beatrice,” answered the gardener, “and I need your help.”

Soon there emerged from under a sculptured portal the figure of a young girl, arrayed with as much richness of taste as the most splendid of the flowers, beautiful as the day, and with a bloom so deep and vivid that one shade more would have been too much. She looked redundant with life, health, and energy, all of which attributes were bound down and compressed, as it were, and girdled tensely, in their luxuriance, by her virgin zone. Yet Giovanni's fancy must have grown morbid while he looked down into the garden; for the impression which the fair stranger made upon him was as if here were another flower, the human sister of those vegetable ones, as beautiful as they, more beautiful than the richest of them, but still to be touched only with a glove, nor to be approached without a mask. As Beatrice came down the garden path, it was observable that she handled and inhaled the odor of several of the plants which her father had most sedulously avoided.

“Here, Beatrice,” said the latter, “see how many needful offices require to be done to our chief treasure. Yet, shattered as I am, my life might pay the penalty of approaching it so closely as circumstances demand. Henceforth, I fear, this plant must be consigned to your sole charge.”

“And gladly will I undertake it,” cried again the rich tones of the young lady, as she bent towards the magnificent plant and opened her arms as if to embrace it. “Yes, my sister, my splendor, it shall be Beatrice's task to nurse and serve thee, and thou shalt reward her with thy kisses and perfumed breath, which to her is as the breath of life.”

Then, with all the tenderness in her manner that was so strikingly expressed in her words, she busied herself with such attentions as the plant seemed to require; and Giovanni, at his lofty window, rubbed his eyes and almost doubted whether it were a girl tending her favorite flower, or one sister performing the duties of affection to another. The scene soon terminated. Whether Dr. Rappaccini had finished his labors in the garden, or that his watchful eye had caught the stranger's face, he now took his daughter's arm and retired. Night was already closing in; oppressive exhalations seemed to proceed from the plants

and steal upward past the open window, and Giovanni, closing the lattice, went to his couch and dreamed of a rich flower and beautiful girl. Flower and maiden were different, and yet the same, and fraught with some strange peril in either shape.

But there is an influence in the light of morning that tends to rectify whatever errors of fancy, or even of judgment, we may have incurred during the sun's decline, or among the shadows of the night, or in the less wholesome glow of moonshine. Giovanni's first movement, on starting from sleep, was to throw open the window and gaze down into the garden which his dreams had made so fertile of mysteries. He was surprised and a little ashamed to find how real and matter-of-fact an affair it proved to be, in the first rays of the sun which gilded the dewdrops that hung upon leaf and blossom, and, while giving a brighter beauty to each rare flower, brought everything within the limits of ordinary experience. The young man rejoiced that, in the heart of the barren city, he had the privilege of overlooking this spot of lovely and luxuriant vegetation. It would serve, he said to himself, as a symbolic language to keep him in communion with Nature. Neither the sickly and thoughtworn Dr. Giacomo Rappaccini, it is true, nor his brilliant daughter, were now visible; so that Giovanni could not determine how much of the singularity which he attributed to both was due to their own qualities and how much to his wonder-working fancy, but he was inclined to take a most rational view of the whole matter.

In the course of the day he paid his respects to Signor Pietro Baglioni, professor of medicine in the university, a physician of eminent repute, to whom Giovanni had brought a letter of introduction. The professor was an elderly personage, apparently of genial nature, and habits that might almost be called jovial. He kept the young man to dinner, and made himself very agreeable by the freedom and liveliness of his conversation, especially when warmed by a flask or two of Tuscan wine. Giovanni, conceiving that men of science, inhabitants of the same city, must needs be on familiar terms with one another, took an opportunity to mention the name of Dr. Rappaccini. But the professor did not respond with so much cordiality as he had anticipated.

"I'll would it become a teacher of the divine art of medicine," said Professor Pietro Baglioni, in answer to a question of Giovanni, "to withhold due and well-

considered praise of a physician so eminently skilled as Rappaccini; but, on the other hand, I should answer it but scantily to my conscience were I to permit a worthy youth like yourself, Signor Giovanni, the son of an ancient friend, to imbibe erroneous ideas respecting a man who might hereafter chance to hold your life and death in his hands. The truth is, our worshipful Dr. Rappaccini has as much science as any member of the faculty—with perhaps one single exception—in Padua, or all Italy, but there are certain grave objections to his professional character."

"And what are they?" asked the young man.

"Has my friend Giovanni any disease of body or heart, that he is so inquisitive about physicians?" said the professor, with a smile. "But as for Rappaccini, it is said of him—and I, who know the man well, can answer for its truth—that he cares infinitely more for science than for mankind. His patients are interesting to him only as subjects for some new experiment. He would sacrifice human life, his own among the rest, or whatever else was dearest to him, for the sake of adding so much as a grain of mustard seed to the great heap of his accumulated knowledge."

"Methinks he is an awful man indeed," remarked Guasconti, mentally recalling the cold and purely intellectual aspect of Rappaccini. "And yet, worshipful professor, is it not a noble spirit? Are there many men capable of so spiritual a love of science?"

"God forbid," answered the professor, somewhat testily; "at least, unless they take sounder views of the healing art than those adopted by Rappaccini. It is his theory that all medicinal virtues are comprised within those substances which we term vegetable poisons. These he cultivates with his own hands, and is said even to have produced new varieties of poison, more horribly deleterious than Nature, without the assistance of this learned person, would ever have plagued the world withal. That the signor doctor does less mischief than might be expected with such dangerous substances is undeniable. Now and then, it must be owned, he has effected, or seemed to effect, a marvellous cure; but, to tell you my private mind, Signor Giovanni, he should receive little credit for such instances of success,—they being probably the work of chance,—but should be held strictly accountable for his failures, which may justly be considered his own work."

The youth might have taken Baglioni's opinions with many grains of allowance had he known that

there was a professional warfare of long continuance between him and Dr. Rappaccini, in which the latter was generally thought to have gained the advantage. If the reader be inclined to judge for himself, we refer him to certain black-letter tracts on both sides, preserved in the medical department of the University of Padua.

"I know not, most learned professor," returned Giovanni, after musing on what had been said of Rappaccini's exclusive zeal for science,—*"I know not* 10 *how dearly this physician may love his art; but surely there is one object more dear to him. He has a daughter!"*

"Aha!" cried the professor, with a laugh. "So now our friend Giovanni's secret is out. You have heard of this daughter, whom all the young men in Padua are wild about, though not half a dozen have ever had the good hap to see her face. I know little of the Signora Beatrice save that Rappaccini is said to have instructed her deeply in his science, and that, young 20 and beautiful as fame reports her, she is already qualified to fill a professor's chair. Perchance her father destines her for mine! Other absurd rumors there be, not worth talking about or listening to. So now, Signor Giovanni, drink off your glass of lachryma."

Guasconti returned to his lodgings somewhat heated with the wine he had quaffed, and which caused his brain to swim with strange fantasies in reference to Dr. Rappaccini and the beautiful Beatrice. On his way, happening to pass by a florist's, he 30 bought a fresh bouquet of flowers.

Ascending to his chamber, he seated himself near the window, but within the shadow thrown by the depth of the wall, so that he could look down into the garden with little risk of being discovered. All beneath his eye was a solitude. The strange plants were basking in the sunshine, and now and then nodding gently to one another, as if in acknowledgment of sympathy and kindred. In the midst, by the shattered fountain, grew the magnificent shrub, with 40 its purple gems clustering all over it; they glowed in the air, and gleamed back again out of the depths of the pool, which thus seemed to overflow with colored radiance from the rich reflection that was steeped in it. At first, as we have said, the garden was a solitude. Soon, however,—as Giovanni had half hoped, half feared, would be the case,—a figure appeared beneath the antique sculptured portal, and came down between the rows of plants, inhaling their

various perfumes as if she were one of those beings of old classic fable that lived upon sweet odors. On again beholding Beatrice, the young man was even startled to perceive how much her beauty exceeded his recollection of it, so brilliant, so vivid, was its character, that she glowed amid the sunlight, and, as Giovanni whispered to himself, positively illuminated the more shadowy intervals of the garden path. Her face being now more revealed than on the former occasion, he was struck by its expression of simplicity and sweetness,—qualities that had not entered into his idea of her character, and which made him ask anew what manner of mortal she might be. Nor did he fail again to observe, or imagine, an analogy between the beautiful girl and the gorgeous shrub that hung its gemlike flowers over the fountain,—a resemblance which Beatrice seemed to have indulged a fantastic humor in heightening, both by the arrangement of her dress and the selection of its hues.

Approaching the shrub, she threw open her arms, as with a passionate ardor, and drew its branches into an intimate embrace—so intimate that her features were hidden in its leafy bosom and her glistening ringlets all intermingled with the flowers.

"Give me thy breath, my sister," exclaimed Beatrice; "for I am faint with common air. And give me this flower of thine, which I separate with gentlest fingers from the stem and place it close beside my heart."

With these words the beautiful daughter of Rappaccini plucked one of the richest blossoms of the shrub, and was about to fasten it in her bosom. But now, unless Giovanni's draughts of wine had bewildered his senses, a singular incident occurred. A small orange-colored reptile, of the lizard or chameleon species, chanced to be creeping along the path, just at the feet of Beatrice. It appeared to Giovanni,—but, at the distance from which he gazed, he could scarcely have seen anything so minute,—it appeared to him, however, that a drop or two of moisture from the broken stem of the flower descended upon the lizard's head. For an instant the reptile contorted itself violently, and then lay motionless in the sunshine. Beatrice observed this remarkable phenomenon, and crossed herself, sadly, but without surprise; nor did she therefore hesitate to arrange the fatal flower in her bosom. There it blushed, and almost glimmered with the dazzling effect of a precious



stone, adding to her dress and aspect the one appropriate charm which nothing else in the world could have supplied. But Giovanni, out of the shadow of his window, bent forward and shrank back, and murmured and trembled.

"Am I awake? Have I my senses?" said he to himself "What is this being? Beautiful shall I call her, or inexpressibly terrible?"

Beatrice now strayed carelessly through the garden, approaching closer beneath Giovanni's window, so that he was compelled to thrust his head quite out of its concealment in order to gratify the intense and painful curiosity which she excited. At this moment there came a beautiful insect over the garden wall; it had, perhaps, wandered through the city, and found no flowers or verdure among those antique haunts of men until the heavy perfumes of Dr. Rappaccini's shrubs had lured it from afar. Without alighting on the flowers, this winged brightness seemed to be attracted by Beatrice, and lingered in the air and fluttered about her head. Now, here it could not be but that Giovanni Guasconti's eyes deceived him. Be that as it might, he fancied that, while Beatrice was gazing at the insect with childish delight, it grew faint and fell at her feet, its bright wings shivered, it was dead—from no cause that he could discern, unless it were the atmosphere of her breath. Again Beatrice crossed herself, and sighed heavily as she bent over the dead insect.

An impulsive movement of Giovanni drew her eyes to the window. There she beheld the beautiful head of the young man—rather a Grecian than an Italian head, with fair, regular features, and a glistening of gold among his ringlets—gazing down upon her like a being that hovered in mid air. Scarcely knowing what he did, Giovanni threw down the bouquet which he had hitherto held in his hand.

"Signora," said he, "there are pure and healthful flowers. Wear them for the sake of Giovanni Guasconti."

"Thanks, signor," replied Beatrice, with her rich voice, that came forth as it were like a gush of music, and with a mirthful expression half childish and half woman-like. "I accept your gift, and would fain recompense it with this precious purple flower; but if I toss it into the air it will not reach you. So Signor Guasconti must even content himself with my thanks."

She lifted the bouquet from the ground, and then,

as if inwardly ashamed at having stepped aside from her maidenly reserve to respond to a stranger's greeting, passed swiftly homeward through the garden. But few as the moments were, it seemed to Giovanni, when she was on the point of vanishing beneath the sculptured portal, that his beautiful bouquet was already beginning to wither in her grasp. It was an idle thought, there could be no possibility of distinguishing a faded flower from a fresh one at so great a distance.

For many days after this incident the young man avoided the window that looked into Dr. Rappaccini's garden, as if something ugly and monstrous would have blasted his eyesight had he been betrayed into a glance. He felt conscious of having put himself, to a certain extent, within the influence of an unintelligible power by the communication which he had opened with Beatrice. The wisest course would have been, if his heart were in any real danger, to quit his lodgings and Padua itself at once; the next wiser, to have accustomed himself, as far as possible, to the familiar and daylight view of Beatrice—thus bringing her rigidly and systematically within the limits of ordinary experience. Least of all, while avoiding her sight, ought Giovanni to have remained so near this extraordinary being that the proximity and possibility even of intercourse should give a kind of substance and reality to the wild vagaries which his imagination ran riot continually in producing. Guasconti had not a deep heart—or, at all events, its depths were not sounded now; but he had a quick fancy, and an ardent southern temperament, which rose every instant to a higher fever pitch. Whether or not Beatrice possessed those terrible attributes, that fatal breath, the affinity with those so beautiful and deadly flowers which were indicated by what Giovanni had witnessed, she had at least instilled a fierce and subtle poison into his system. It was not love, although her rich beauty was a madness to him; nor horror, even while he fancied her spirit to be imbued with the same baneful essence that seemed to pervade her physical frame; but a wild offspring of both love and horror that had each parent in it, and burned like one and shivered like the other. Giovanni knew not what to dread; still less did he know what to hope; yet hope and dread kept a continual warfare in his breast, alternately vanquishing one another and starting up afresh to renew the contest. Blessed are all simple emotions, be they dark or bright! It is the

lurid intermixture of the two that produces the illuminating blaze of the infernal regions.

Sometimes he endeavored to assuage the fever of his spirit by a rapid walk through the streets of Padua or beyond its gates his footsteps kept time with the throbbings of his brain, so that the walk was apt to accelerate itself to a race. One day he found himself arrested, his aim was seized by a portly personage, who had turned back on recognizing the young man and expended much breath in overtaking him.

"Signor Giovanni! Stay, my young friend!" cried he "Have you forgotten me? That might well be the case if I were as much altered as yourself."

It was Baglioni, whom Giovanni had avoided ever since their first meeting, from a doubt that the professor's sagacity would look too deeply into his secrets. Endeavoring to recover himself, he stared forth wildly from his inner world into the outer one and spoke like a man in a dream.

"Yes, I am Giovanni Guasconti. You are Professor Pietro Baglioni. Now let me pass!"

"Not yet, not yet, Signor Giovanni Guasconti," said the professor, smiling, but at the same time scrutinizing the youth with an earnest glance. "What! did I grow up side by side with your father? and shall his son pass me like a stranger in these old streets of Padua? Stand still, Signor Giovanni; for we must have a word or two before we part."

"Speedily, then, most worshipful professor, speedily," said Giovanni, with feverish impatience. "Does not your worship see that I am in haste?"

Now, while he was speaking there came a man in black along the street, stooping and moving feebly like a person in inferior health. His face was all over-spread with a most sickly and sallow hue, but yet so pervaded with an expression of piercing and active intellect that an observer might easily have overlooked the merely physical attributes and have seen only this wonderful energy. As he passed, this person exchanged a cold and distant salutation with Baglioni, but fixed his eyes upon Giovanni with an intentness that seemed to bring out whatever was within him worthy of notice. Nevertheless, there was a peculiar quietness in the look, as if taking merely a speculative, not a human, interest in the young man.

"It is Dr. Rappaccini!" whispered the professor when the stranger had passed. "Has he ever seen your face before?"

"Not that I know," answered Giovanni, starting at the name.

"He *has* seen you! he must have seen you!" said Baglioni, hastily. "For some purpose or other, this man of science is making a study of you. I know that look of his! It is the same that coldly illuminates his face as he bends over a bird, a mouse, or a butterfly, which, in pursuance of some experiment, he has killed by the perfume of a flower, a look as deep as Nature itself, but without Nature's warmth of love. Signor Giovanni, I will stake my life upon it, you are the subject of one of Rappaccini's experiments!"

"Will you make a fool of me?" cried Giovanni, passionately. "That, signor professor, were an untoward experiment."

"Patience! patience!" replied the imperturbable professor. "I tell thee, my poor Giovanni, that Rappaccini has a scientific interest in thee. Thou hast fallen into fearful hands! And the Signora Beatrice,—what part does she act in this mystery?"

But Guasconti, finding Baglioni's pertinacity intolerable, here broke away, and was gone before the professor could again seize his arm. He looked after the young man intently and shook his head.

"This must not be," said Baglioni to himself. "The youth is the son of my old friend, and shall not come to any harm from which the arcana of medical science can preserve him. Besides, it is too insufferable an impertinence in Rappaccini, thus to snatch the lad out of my own hands, as I may say, and make use of him for his infernal experiments. This daughter of his! It shall be looked to. Perchance, most learned Rappaccini, I may foil you where you little dream of it!"

Meanwhile Giovanni had pursued a circuitous route, and at length found himself at the door of his lodgings. As he crossed the threshold he was met by old Lisabetta, who smirked and smiled, and was evidently desirous to attract his attention; vainly, however, as the ebullition of his feelings had momentarily subsided into a cold and dull vacuity. He turned his eyes full upon the withered face that was puckering itself into a smile, but seemed to behold it not. The old dame, therefore laid her grasp upon his cloak.

"Signor! signor!" whispered she, still with a smile over the whole breadth of her visage, so that it looked not unlike a grotesque carving in wood, darkened by

centuries "Listen, signor! There is a private entrance into the garden!"

"What do you say?" exclaimed Giovanni, turning quickly about, as if an inanimate thing should start into feverish life. "A private entrance into Dr Rappaccini's garden?"

"Hush! hush! not so loud!" whispered Lisabetta, putting her hand over his mouth "Yes, into the worshipful doctor's garden, where you may see all his fine shrubbery. Many a young man in Padua<sup>10</sup> would give gold to be admitted among those flowers."

Giovanni put a piece of gold into her hand.

"Show me the way," said he.

A surmise, probably excited by his conversation with Baghoni, crossed his mind, that this interposition of old Lisabetta might perchance be connected with the intrigue, whatever were its nature, in which the professor seemed to suppose that Dr Rappaccini was involving him But such a suspicion, though it disturbed Giovanni, was inadequate to restrain him.<sup>20</sup> The instant that he was aware of the possibility of approaching Beatrice, it seemed an absolute necessity of his existence to do so It mattered not whether she were angel or demon, he was inevitably within her sphere, and must obey the law that whirled him onward, in ever-lessening circles, towards a result which he did not attempt to foreshadow; and yet, strange to say, there came across him a sudden doubt whether this intense interest on his part were not delusory; whether it were really of so deep and positive a nature as to justify him in now thrusting himself into an incalculable position; whether it were not merely the fantasy of a young man's brain, only slightly or not at all connected with his heart

He paused, hesitated, turned half about, but again went on His withered guide led him along several obscure passages, and finally undid a door, through which, as it was opened, there came the sight and sound of rustling leaves, with the broken sunshine glimmering among them Giovanni stepped forth,<sup>40</sup> and, forcing himself through the entanglement of a shrub that wreathed its tendrils over the hidden entrance, stood beneath his own window in the open area of Dr. Rappaccini's garden.

How often is it the case that, when impossibilities have come to pass and dreams have condensed their misty substance into tangible realities, we find ourselves calm, and even coldly self-possessed, amid circumstances which it would have been a delirium

of joy or agony to anticipate! Fate delights to thwart us thus Passion will choose his own time to rush upon the scene, and lingers sluggishly behind when an appropriate adjustment of events would seem to summon his appearance So was it now with Giovanni Day after day his pulses had throbbed with feverish blood at the improbable idea of an interview with Beatrice, and of standing with her, face to face, in this very garden, basking in the Oriental sunshine of her beauty, and snatching from her full gaze the mystery which he deemed the riddle of his own existence But now there was a singular and untimely equanimity within his breast He threw a glance around the garden to discover if Beatrice or her father were present, and, perceiving that he was alone, began a critical observation of the plants

The aspect of one and all of them dissatisfied him, their gorgeousness seemed fierce, passionate, and even unnatural There was hardly an individual shrub which a wanderer, straying by himself through a forest, would not have been startled to find growing wild, as if an unearthly face had glared at him out of the thicket. Several also would have shocked a delicate instinct by an appearance of artificialness indicating that there had been such commixture, and, as it were, adultery, of various vegetable species, that the production was no longer of God's making, but the monstrous offspring of man's depraved fancy, glowing with only an evil mockery of beauty. They were probably the result of experiment, which in one or two cases had succeeded in mingling plants individually lovely into a compound possessing the questionable and ominous character that distinguished the whole growth of the garden In fine, Giovanni recognized but two or three plants in the collection, and those of a kind that he well knew to be poisonous. While busy with these contemplations he heard the rustling of a silken garment, and, turning, beheld Beatrice emerging from beneath the sculptured portal.

Giovanni had not considered with himself what should be his deportment; whether he should apologize for his intrusion into the garden, or assume that he was there with the privacy at least, if not by the desire, of Dr. Rappaccini or his daughter; but Beatrice's manner placed him at his ease, though leaving him still in doubt by what agency he had gained admittance. She came lightly along the path and met him near the broken fountain. There was surprise in

her face, but brightened by a simple and kind expression of pleasure

"You are a connoisseur in flowers, signor," said Beatrice, with a smile, alluding to the bouquet which he had flung her from the window "It is no marvel, therefore, if the sight of my father's rare collection has tempted you to take a nearer view If he were here, he could tell you many strange and interesting facts as to the nature and habits of these shrubs, for he has spent a lifetime in such studies, and this garden is his world"

"And yourself, lady," observed Giovanni, "if fame says true,—you likewise are deeply skilled in the virtues indicated by these rich blossoms and these spicy perfumes Would you deign to be my instructress, I should prove an apter scholar than if taught by Signor Rappaccini himself"

"Are there such idle rumors?" asked Beatrice, with the music of a pleasant laugh "Do people say that I am skilled in my father's science of plants? What a jest is there! No, though I have grown up among these flowers, I know no more of them than their hues and perfumes; and sometimes methinks I would fain rid myself of even that small knowledge There are many flowers here, and those not the least brilliant, that shock and offend me when they meet my eye. But pray, signor, do not believe these stories about my science Believe nothing of me save what you see with your own eyes"

"And must I believe all that I have seen with my own eyes?" asked Giovanni, pointedly, while the recollection of former scenes made him shrink "No, signora; you demand too little of me. Bid me believe nothing save what comes from your own lips."

It would appear that Beatrice understood him There came a deep flush to her cheek; but she looked full into Giovanni's eyes, and responded to his gaze of uneasy suspicion with a queenlike haughtiness

"I do so bid you, signor," she replied "Forget whatever you may have fancied in regard to me. If true to the outward senses, still it may be false in its essence; but the words of Beatrice Rappaccini's lips are true from the depths of the heart outward. Those you may believe."

A fervor glowed in her whole aspect and beamed upon Giovanni's consciousness like the light of truth itself, but while she spoke there was a fragrance in the atmosphere around her, rich and delightful, though evanescent, yet which the young man, from

an indefinable reluctance, scarcely dared to draw into his lungs It might be the odor of the flowers Could it be Beatrice's breath which thus embalmed her words with a strange richness, as if by steeping them in her heart? A faintness passed like a shadow over Giovanni and flitted away, he seemed to gaze through the beautiful girl's eyes into her transparent soul, and felt no more doubt or fear

The tinge of passion that had colored Beatrice's manner vanished, she became gay, and appeared to derive a pure delight from her communion with the youth not unlike what the maiden of a lonely island might have felt conversing with a voyager from the civilized world. Evidently her experience of life had been confined within the limits of that garden She talked now about matters as simple as the daylight or summer clouds, and now asked questions in reference to the city, or Giovanni's distant home, his friends, his mother, and his sisters—questions indicating such seclusion, and such lack of familiarity with modes and forms, that Giovanni responded as if to an infant Her spirit gushed out before him like a fresh rill that was just catching its first glimpse of the sunlight and wondering at the reflections of earth and sky which were flung into its bosom There came thoughts, too, from a deep source, and fantasies of a gemlike brilliancy, as if diamonds and rubies sparkled upward among the bubbles of the fountain. Ever and anon there gleamed across the young man's mind a sense of wonder that he should be walking side by side with the being who had so wrought upon his imagination, whom he had idealized in such hues of terror, in whom he had positively witnessed such manifestations of dreadful attributes,—that he should be conversing with Beatrice like a brother, and should find her so human and so maidenlike But such reflections were only momentary, the effect of her character was too real not to make itself familiar at once

In this free intercourse they had strayed through the garden, and now, after many turns among its avenues, were come to the shattered fountain, beside which grew the magnificent shrub, with its treasury of glowing blossoms A fragrance was diffused from it which Giovanni recognized as identical with that which he had attributed to Beatrice's breath, but incomparably more powerful As her eyes fell upon it, Giovanni beheld her press her hand to her bosom as if her heart were throbbing suddenly and painfully

"For the first time in my life," murmured she, addressing the shrub, "I had forgotten thee"

"I remember, signora," said Giovanni, "that you once promised to reward me with one of these living gems for the bouquet which I had the happy boldness to fling to your feet. Permit me now to pluck it as a memorial of this interview"

He made a step towards the shrub with extended hand, but Beatrice darted forward, uttering a shriek that went through his heart like a dagger. She caught his hand and drew it back with the whole force of her slender figure. Giovanni felt her touch thrilling through his fibres.

"Touch it not!" exclaimed she, in a voice of agony. "Not for thy life! It is fatal!"

Then, hiding her face, she fled from him and vanished beneath the sculptured portal. As Giovanni followed her with his eyes, he beheld the emaciated figure and pale intelligence of Dr. Rappaccini, who had been watching the scene, he knew not how long, within the shadow of the entrance.

No sooner was Guasconti alone in his chamber than the image of Beatrice came back to his passionate musings, invested with all the witchery that had been gathering around it ever since his first glimpse of her, and now likewise imbued with a tender warmth of girlish womanhood. She was human, her nature was endowed with all gentle and feminine qualities. She was worthiest to be worshipped; she was capable, surely, on her part, of the height and heroism of love. Those tokens which he had hitherto considered as proofs of a frightful peculiarity in her physical and moral system were now either forgotten, or, by the subtle sophistry of passion transmitted into a golden crown of enchantment, rendering Beatrice the more admirable by so much as she was the more unique. Whatever had looked ugly was now beautiful; or, if incapable of such a change, it stole away and hid itself among those shapeless half ideas which throng the dim region beyond the day-<sup>30</sup> light of our perfect consciousness. Thus did he spend the night, nor fell asleep until the dawn had begun to awake the slumbering flowers in Dr. Rappaccini's garden, whither Giovanni's dreams doubtless led him. Up rose the sun in his due season, and, flinging his beams upon the young man's eyelids, awoke him to a sense of pain. When thoroughly aroused, he became sensible of a burning and tingling agony in his hand—in his right hand—the very hand which

Beatrice had grasped in her own when he was on the point of plucking one of the gemlike flowers. On the back of that hand there was now a purple print like that of four small fingers, and the likeness of a slender thumb upon his wrist.

Oh, how stubbornly does love,—or even that cunning semblance of love which flourishes in the imagination, but strikes no depth of root into the heart,—how stubbornly does it hold its faith until the moment comes when it is doomed to vanish into thin mist! Giovanni wrapped a handkerchief about his hand and wondered what evil thing had stung him, and soon forgot his pain in a reverie of Beatrice.

After the first interview, a second was in the inevitable course of what we call fate. A third, a fourth, and a meeting with Beatrice in the garden was no longer an incident in Giovanni's daily life, but the whole space in which he might be said to live, for the anticipation and memory of that ecstatic hour made up the remainder. Nor was it otherwise with the daughter of Rappaccini. She watched for the youth's appearance, and flew to his side with confidence as unreserved as if they had been playmates from early infancy—as if they were such playmates still. If, by any unwonted chance, he failed to come at the appointed moment, she stood beneath the window and sent up the rich sweetness of her tones to float around him in his chamber and echo and reverberate throughout his heart. "Giovanni! Giovanni! Why tarriest thou? Come down!" And down he hastened into that Eden of poisonous flowers.

But, with all this intimate familiarity, there was still a reserve in Beatrice's demeanor, so rigidly and invariably sustained that the idea of infringing it scarcely occurred to his imagination. By all appreciable signs, they loved; they had looked love with eyes that conveyed the holy secret from the depths of one soul into the depths of the other, as if it were too sacred to be whispered by the way, they had even spoken love in those gushes of passion when their spirits darted forth in articulated breath like tongues of long-hidden flame; and yet there had been no seal of lips, no clasp of hands, nor any slightest caress such as love claims and hallows. He had never touched one of the gleaming ringlets of her hair; her garment—so marked was the physical barrier between them—had never been waved against him by a breeze. On the few occasions when Giovanni had seemed tempted to overstep the limit, Beatrice grew

so sad, so stern, and withal wore such a look of desolate separation, shuddering at itself, that not a spoken word was requisite to repel him. At such times he was startled at the horrible suspicions that rose, monster-like, out of the caverns of his heart and stared him in the face; his love grew thin and faint as the morning mist, his doubts alone had substance. But, when Beatrice's face brightened again after the momentary shadow, she was transformed at once from the mysterious, questionable being whom he had watched with so much awe and horror, she was now the beautiful and unsophisticated girl whom he felt his spirit knew with a certainty beyond all other knowledge.

A considerable time had now passed since Giovanni's last meeting with Baglioni. One morning, however, he was disagreeably surprised by a visit from the professor, whom he had scarcely thought of for whole weeks, and would willingly have forgotten still longer. Given up as he had long been to a per-<sup>20</sup> vading excitement, he could tolerate no companions except upon condition of their perfect sympathy with his present state of feeling. Such sympathy was not to be expected from Professor Baglioni.

The visitor chatted carelessly for a few moments about the gossip of the city and the university, and then took up another topic.

"I have been reading an old classic author lately," said he, "and met with a story that strangely interested me. Possibly you may remember it. It is of an<sup>30</sup> Indian prince, who sent a beautiful woman as a present to Alexander the Great. She was as lovely as the dawn and gorgeous as the sunset, but what especially distinguished her was a certain rich perfume in her breath—richer than a garden of Persian roses. Alexander, as was natural to a youthful conqueror, fell in love at first sight with this magnificent stranger, but a certain sage physician, happening to be present, discovered a terrible secret in regard to her."

"And what was that?" asked Giovanni, turning his eyes downward to avoid those of the professor.

"That this lovely woman," continued Baglioni, with emphasis, "had been nourished with poisons from her birth upward, until her whole nature was so imbued with them that she herself had become the deadliest poison in existence. Poison was her element of life. With that rich perfume of her breath she blasted the very air. Her love would have been

poison—her embrace death. Is not this a marvellous tale?"

"A childish fable," answered Giovanni, nervously starting from his chair. "I marvel how your worship finds time to read such nonsense among your graver studies."

"By the by," said the professor, looking uneasily about him, "what singular fragrance is this in your apartment? Is it the perfume of your gloves? It is faint, but delicious, and yet, after all, by no means agreeable. Were I to breathe it long, methinks it would make me ill. It is like the breath of a flower, but I see no flowers in the chamber."

"Nor are there any," replied Giovanni, who had turned pale as the professor spoke, "nor, I think, is there any fragrance except in your worship's imagination. Odors, being a sort of element combined of the sensual and the spiritual, are apt to deceive us in this manner. The recollection of a perfume, the bare idea of it, may easily be mistaken for a present reality."

"Ay, but my sober imagination does not often play such tricks," said Baglioni, "and, were I to fancy any kind of odor, it would be that of some vile apothecary drug, whicewith my fingers are likely enough to be imbued. Our worshipful friend Rappaccini, as I have heard, tinctures his medicaments with odors richer than those of Araby. Doubtless, likewise, the fair and learned Signora Beatrice would minister to her patients with draughts as sweet as a maiden's breath; but woe to him that sips them!"

Giovanni's face evinced many contending emotions. The tone in which the professor alluded to the pure and lovely daughter of Rappaccini was a torture to his soul; and yet the intimation of a view of her character, opposite to his own, gave instantaneous distinctness to a thousand dim suspicions, which now grinned at him like so many demons. But he strove hard to quell them and to respond to Baglioni with a true lover's perfect faith.

<sup>40</sup> "Signor professor," said he, "you were my father's friend; perchance, too, it is your purpose to act a friendly part towards his son. I would fain feel nothing towards you save respect and deference; but I pray you to observe, signor, that there is one subject on which we must not speak. You know not the Signora Beatrice. You cannot, therefore, estimate the wrong—the blasphemy, I may even say—that is offered to her character by a light or injurious word."

"Giovanni! my poor Giovanni!" answered the pro-

fessor, with a calm expression of pity, "I know this wretched girl far better than yourself. You shall hear the truth in respect to the poisoner Rappaccini and his poisonous daughter; yes, poisonous as she is beautiful. Listen, for, even should you do violence to my gray hairs, it shall not silence me. That old fable of the Indian woman has become a truth by the deep and deadly science of Rappaccini and in the person of the lovely Beatrice."

Giovanni groaned and hid his face.

"Her father," continued Baglioni, "was not restrained by natural affection from offering up his child in this horrible manner as the victim of his insane zeal for science, for, let us do him justice, he is as true a man of science as ever distilled his own heart in an alembic. What, then, will be your fate? Beyond a doubt you are selected as the material of some new experiment. Perhaps the result is to be death; perhaps a fate more awful still. Rappaccini, with what he calls the interest of science before his eyes, will hesitate at nothing."

"It is a dream," muttered Giovanni to himself, "surely it is a dream."

"But," resumed the professor, "be of good cheer, son of my friend. It is not yet too late for the rescue. Possibly we may even succeed in bringing back this miserable child within the limits of ordinary nature, from which her father's madness has estranged her. Behold this little silver vase! It was wrought by the hands of the renowned Benvenuto Cellini, and is well worthy to be a love gift to the fairest dame in Italy. But its contents are invaluable. One little sip of this antidote would have rendered the most virulent poisons of the Borgias innocuous. Doubt not that it will be as efficacious against those of Rappaccini. Bestow the vase, and the precious liquid within it, on your Beatrice, and hopefully await the result."

Baglioni laid a small, exquisitely wrought silver vial on the table and withdrew, leaving what he had said to produce its effect upon the young man's mind.

"We will thwart Rappaccini yet," thought he, chuckling to himself, as he descended the stairs; "but, let us confess the truth of him, he is a wonderful man—a wonderful man indeed, a vile empiric, however, in his practice, and therefore not to be tolerated by those who respect the good old rules of the medical profession."

Throughout Giovanni's whole acquaintance with

Beatrice, he had occasionally, as we have said, been haunted by dark surmises as to her character, yet so thoroughly had she made herself felt by him as a simple, natural, most affectionate, and guileless creature, that the image now held up by Professor Baglioni looked as strange and incredible as if it were not in accordance with his own original conception. True, there were ugly recollections connected with his first glimpses of the beautiful girl, he could not quite forget the bouquet that withered in her grasp, and the insect that perished amid the sunny air, by no ostensible agency save the fragrance of her breath. These incidents, however, dissolving in the pure light of her character, had no longer the efficacy of facts, but were acknowledged as mistaken fantasies, by whatever testimony of the senses they might appear to be substantiated. There is something truer and more real than what we can see with the eyes and touch with the finger. On such better evidence had Giovanni founded his confidence in Beatrice, though rather by the necessary force of her high attributes than by any deep and generous faith on his part. But now his spirit was incapable of sustaining itself at the height to which the early enthusiasm of passion had exalted it; he fell down, grovelling among earthly doubts, and defiled therewith the pure whiteness of Beatrice's image. Not that he gave her up; he did but distrust. He resolved to institute some decisive test that should satisfy him, once for all, whether there were those dreadful peculiarities in her physical nature which could not be supposed to exist without some corresponding monstrosity of soul. His eyes, gazing down afar, might have deceived him as to the lizard, the insect, and the flowers; but if he could witness, at the distance of a few paces, the sudden blight of one fresh and healthful flower in Beatrice's hand, there would be room for no further question. With this idea he hastened to the florist's and purchased a bouquet that was still gemmed with the morning dew-drops.

It was now the customary hour of his daily interview with Beatrice. Before descending into the garden, Giovanni failed not to look at his figure in the mirror,—a vanity to be expected in a beautiful young man, yet, as displaying itself at that troubled and feverish moment, the token of a certain shallowness of feeling and insincerity of character. He did gaze, however, and said to himself that his features had

never before possessed so rich a grace, nor his eyes such vivacity, nor his cheeks so warm a hue of superabundant life

"At least," thought he, "her poison has not yet insinuated itself into my system. I am no flower to perish in her grasp"

With that thought he turned his eyes on the bouquet, which he had never once laid aside from his hand. A thrill of indefinable horror shot through his frame on perceiving that those dewy flowers were already beginning to droop, they wore the aspect of things that had been fresh and lovely yesterday. Giovanni grew white as marble, and stood motionless before the mirror, staring at his own reflection there as at the likeness of something frightful. He remembered Baglioni's remark about the fragrance that seemed to pervade the chamber. It must have been the poison in his breath! Then he shuddered—shuddered at himself. Recovering from his stupor, he began to watch with curious eye a spider that was busily at work hanging its web from the antique cornice of the apartment, crossing and recrossing the artful system of interwoven lines—as vigorous and active a spider as ever dangled from an old ceiling. Giovanni bent towards the insect, and emitted a deep, long breath. The spider suddenly ceased its toil, the web vibrated with a tremor originating in the body of the small artisan. Again Giovanni sent forth a breath, deeper, longer, and imbued with a venomous feeling out of his heart: he knew not whether he were wicked, or only desperate. The spider made a convulsive gripe with his limbs and hung dead across the window.

"Accursed! accursed!" muttered Giovanni, addressing himself "Hast thou grown so poisonous that this deadly insect perishes by thy breath?"

At that moment a rich, sweet voice came floating up from the garden.

"Giovanni! Giovanni! It is past the hour! Why tarest thou? Come down!"

"Yes," muttered Giovanni again "She is the only being whom my breath may not slay! Would that it might!"

He rushed down, and in an instant was standing before the bright and loving eyes of Beatrice. A moment ago his wrath and despair had been so fierce that he could have desired nothing so much as to wither her by a glance; but with her actual presence there came influences which had too real an existence

to be at once shaken off recollections of the delicate and benign power of her feminine nature, which had so often enveloped him in a religious calm, recollections of many a holy and passionate outgush of her heart, when the pure fountain had been unsealed from its depths and made visible in its transparency to his mental eye; recollections which, had Giovanni known how to estimate them, would have assured him that all this ugly mystery was but an earthly illusion, and that, whatever mist of evil might seem to have gathered over her, the real Beatrice was a heavenly angel. Incapable as he was of such high faith, still her presence had not utterly lost its magic. Giovanni's rage was quelled into an aspect of sullen insensibility. Beatrice, with a quick spiritual sense, immediately felt that there was a gulf of blackness between them which neither he nor she could pass. They walked on together, sad and silent, and came thus to the marble fountain and to its pool of water on the ground, in the midst of which grew the shrub that bore gem-like blossoms. Giovanni was affrighted at the eager enjoyment—the appetite, as it were—with which he found himself inhaling the fragrance of the flowers.

"Beatrice," asked he, abruptly, "whence came this shrub?"

"My father created it," answered she, with simplicity.

"Created it! created it!" repeated Giovanni. "What mean you, Beatrice?"

"He is a man fearfully acquainted with the secrets of Nature," replied Beatrice; "and, at the hour when I first drew breath, this plant sprang from the soil, the offspring of his science, of his intellect, while I was but his earthly child. Approach it not!" continued she, observing with terror that Giovanni was drawing nearer to the shrub. "It has qualities that you little dream of. But I, dearest Giovanni,—I grew up and blossomed with the plant and was nourished with its breath. It was my sister, and I loved it with a human affection, for, alas!—hast thou not suspected it?—there was an awful doom"

Here Giovanni frowned so darkly upon her that Beatrice paused and trembled. But her faith in his tenderness reassured her, and made her blush that she had doubted for an instant.

"There was an awful doom," she continued, "the effect of my father's fatal love of science, which estranged me from all society of my kind. Until



Heaven sent thee, dearest Giovanni, oh, how lonely was thy poor Beatrice!"

"Was it a hard doom?" asked Giovanni, fixing his eyes upon her.

"Only of late have I known how hard it was," answered she, tenderly "Oh, yes, but my heart was torpid, and therefore quiet."

Giovanni's rage broke forth from his sullen gloom like a lightning flash out of a dark cloud.

"Accursed one!" cried he, with venomous scorn and anger. "And, finding thy solitude wearisome, thou hast severed me likewise from all the warmth of life and enticed me into thy region of unspeakable horror!"

"Giovanni!" exclaimed Beatrice, turning her large bright eyes upon his face. The force of his words had not found its way into her mind, she was merely thunderstruck.

"Yes, poisonous thing!" repeated Giovanni, beside himself with passion. "Thou hast done it! Thou hast blasted me! Thou hast filled my veins with poison! Thou hast made me as hateful, as ugly, as loathsome and deadly a creature as thyself—a world's wonder of hideous monstrosity! Now, if our breath be happily as fatal to ourselves as to all others, let us join our lips in one kiss of unutterable hatred, and so die!"

"What has befallen me?" murmured Beatrice, with a low moan out of her heart. "Holy Virgin, pity me, a poor heart-broken child!"

"Thou,—dost thou pray?" cried Giovanni, still with the same fiendish scorn. "Thy very prayers, as they come from thy lips, taint the atmosphere with death. Yes, yes; let us pray! Let us to church and dip our fingers in the holy water at the portal! They that come after us will perish as by a pestilence! Let us sign crosses in the air! It will be scattering curses abroad in the likeness of holy symbols!"

"Giovanni," said Beatrice, calmly, for her grief was beyond passion, "why dost thou join thyself with me thus in those terrible words? I, it is true, am the horrible thing thou namest me. But thou,—what hast thou to do, save with one other shudder at my hideous misery to go forth out of the garden and mingle with thy race, and forget that there ever crawled on earth such a monster as poor Beatrice?"

"Dost thou pretend ignorance?" asked Giovanni, scowling upon her. "Behold! this power have I gained from the pure daughter of Rappaccini."

There was a swarm of summer insects flitting through the air in search of the food promised by the flower odors of the fatal garden. They circled round Giovanni's head, and were evidently attracted towards him by the same influence which had drawn them for an instant within the sphere of several of the shrubs. He sent forth a breath among them, and smiled bitterly at Beatrice as at least a score of the insects fell dead upon the ground.

"I see it! I see it!" shrieked Beatrice. "It is my father's fatal science! No, no, Giovanni, it was not I! Never! never! I dreamed only to love thee and be with thee a little time, and so to let thee pass away, leaving but thine image in mine heart, for, Giovanni, believe it, though my body be nourished with poison, my spirit is God's creature, and craves love as its daily food. But my father,—he has united us in this fearful sympathy. Yes, spurn me, tread upon me, kill me! Oh, what is death after such words as thine? But it was not I. Not for a world of bliss would I have done it."

Giovanni's passion had exhausted itself in its outburst from his lips. There now came across him a sense, mournful, and not without tenderness, of the intimate and peculiar relationship between Beatrice and himself. They stood, as it were, in an utter solitude, which would be made none the less solitary by the densest throng of human life. Ought not, then, the desert of humanity around them to press this insulated pair closer together? If they should be cruel to one another, who was there to be kind to them? Besides, thought Giovanni, might there not still be a hope of his returning within the limits of ordinary nature, and leading Beatrice, the redeemed Beatrice, by the hand? O, weak, and selfish, and unworthy spirit, that could dream of an earthly union and earthly happiness as possible, after such deep love had been so bitterly wronged as was Beatrice's love by Giovanni's blighting words! No, no; there could be no such hope. She must pass heavily, with that broken heart, across the borders of Time—she must bathe her hurts in some fount of paradise, and forget her grief in the light of immortality, and *there* be well.

But Giovanni did not know it.

"Dear Beatrice," said he, approaching her, while she shrank away as always at his approach, but now with a different impulse, "dearest Beatrice, our fate is not yet so desperate. Behold! there is a medicine,

potent, as a wise physician has assured me, and almost divine in its efficacy. It is composed of ingredients the most opposite to those by which thy awful father has brought this calamity upon thee and me. It is distilled of blessed herbs. Shall we not quaff it together, and thus be purified from evil?"

"Give it me!" said Beatrice, extending her hand to receive the little silver vial which Giovanni took from his bosom. She added, with a peculiar emphasis, "I will drink, but do thou await the result."

She put Baglioni's antidote to her lips, and, at the same moment, the figure of Rappaccini emerged from the portal and came slowly towards the marble fountain. As he drew near, the pale man of science seemed to gaze with a triumphant expression at the beautiful youth and maiden, as might an artist who should spend his life in achieving a picture of a group of statuary and finally be satisfied with his success. He paused, his bent form grew erect with conscious power, he spread out his hands over them in the attitude of a father imploring a blessing upon his children, but those were the same hands that had thrown poison into the stream of their lives. Giovanni trembled. Beatrice shuddered nervously, and pressed her hand upon her heart.

"My daughter," said Rappaccini, "thou art no longer lonely in the world. Pluck one of those precious gems from thy sister shrub and bid thy bridegroom wear it in his bosom. It will not harm him now. My science and the sympathy between thee and him have so wrought within his system that he now stands from common men, as thou dost, daughter of my pride and triumph, from ordinary women. Pass on then, through the world, most dear to one another and dreadful to all besides!"

"My father," said Beatrice, feebly,—and still as she spoke she kept her hand upon her heart,—

"wherefore didst thou inflict this miserable doom upon thy child?"

"Miserable!" exclaimed Rappaccini. "What mean you, foolish girl? Dost thou deem it misery to be endowed with marvellous gifts against which no power nor strength could avail an enemy—misery, to be able to quell the mightiest with a breath—misery, to be as terrible as thou art beautiful? Wouldst thou, then, have preferred the condition of a weak woman, exposed to all evil and capable of none?"

"I would fain have been loved, not feared," murmured Beatrice, sinking down upon the ground. "But now it matters not. I am going, father, where the evil which thou hast striven to mingle with my being will pass away like a dream—like the fragrance of these poisonous flowers, which will no longer taint my breath among the flowers of Eden. Farewell, Giovanni! Thy words of hatred are like lead within my heart; but they, too, will fall away as I ascend. Oh, was there not, from the first, more poison in thy nature than in mine?"

To Beatrice,—so radically had her earthly part been wrought upon by Rappaccini's skill,—as poison had been life, so the powerful antidote was death; and thus the poor victim of man's ingenuity and of thwarted nature, and of the fatality that attends all such efforts of perverted wisdom, perished there, at the feet of her father and Giovanni. Just at that moment Professor Pietro Baglioni looked forth from the window, and called loudly, in a tone of triumph mixed with horror, to the thunderstricken man of science,—

"Rappaccini! Rappaccini! and is *this* the upshot of your experiment!"

December, 1844

1846

FROM

*The Snow-Image and Other Tales**Ethan Brand*<sup>56</sup>

## A CHAPTER FROM AN ABORTIVE ROMANCE

Bartram the lime-burner, a rough, heavy-looking man, begrimed with charcoal, sat watching his kiln, at nightfall, while his little son played at building houses with the scattered fragments of marble, when, on the hillside below them, they heard a roar of laughter, not mirthful, but slow, and even solemn, like a wind shaking the boughs of the forest

"Father, what is that?" asked the little boy, leaving his play, and pressing betwixt his father's knees.

"Oh, some drunken man, I suppose," answered the lime-burner, "some merry fellow from the bar-room in the village, who dares not laugh loud enough within doors lest he should blow the roof of the house off. So here he is, shaking his jolly sides at the foot of Graylock."

"But, father," said the child, more sensitive than the obtuse, middle-aged clown, "he does not laugh like a man that is glad. So the noise frightens me!"

"Don't be a fool, child!" cried his father, gruffly. "You will never make a man, I do believe, there is too much of your mother in you. I have known the rustling of a leaf startle you. Hark! Here comes the merry fellow now. You shall see that there is no harm in him."

Bartram and his little son, while they were talking thus, sat watching the same lime-kiln that had been the scene of Ethan Brand's solitary and meditative life, before he began his search for the Unpardonable Sin. Many years, as we have seen, had now elapsed, since that portentous night when the idea was first

developed. The kiln, however, on the mountain-side, stood unimpaired, and was in nothing changed since he had thrown his dark thoughts into the intense glow of its furnace, and melted them, as it were, into the one thought that took possession of his life. It was a rude, round, tower-like structure about twenty feet high, heavily built of rough stones, and with a hillock of earth heaped about the larger part of its circumference; so that the blocks and fragments of marble might be drawn by cart-loads, and thrown in at the top. There was an opening at the bottom of the tower, like an oven-mouth, but large enough to admit a man in a stooping posture, and provided with a massive iron door. With the smoke and jets of flame issuing from the chinks and crevices of this door, which seemed to give admittance into the hillside, it resembled nothing so much as the private entrance to the infernal regions, which the shepherds of the Delectable Mountains were accustomed to show to pilgrims.

There are many such lime-kilns in that tract of country, for the purpose of burning the white marble which composes a large part of the substance of the hills. Some of them, built years ago, and long deserted, with weeds growing in the vacant round of the interior, which is open to the sky, and grass and wild-flowers rooting themselves into the chinks of the stones, look already like relics of antiquity, and may yet be overspread with the lichens of centuries to come. Others, where the lime-burner still feeds his daily and night-long fire, afford points of interest to the wanderer among the hills, who seats himself on a log of wood or a fragment of marble, to hold a

his diorama, the little boy named Joe, and the incident of the dog.

It can hardly be maintained, as Lewis Mumford argued in his study of  *Herman Melville* (New York, 1929, pp. 145-47), that Ethan Brand is a characterization of Melville, chiefly because Hawthorne and Melville were unacquainted with each other and each other's works until after this tale was written. There is more reason for holding, with Bliss Perry, that Ethan Brand is the picture of the man whom Hawthorne feared he might have become if he had allowed his fondness for psychological probings and prying into the inner recesses of human consciousness to develop unchecked. There are other stories of Hawthorne's into which the student is tempted to read special meanings, and autobiographical significance. For example, it is almost impossible not to feel, as one considers Hawthorne's frequent handling of the theme of isolation, that he did not draw upon his own experiences.

<sup>56</sup> This tale appeared in the *Boston Museum*, January 5, 1850. Two passages in the *American Note-Books* for 1844 shed light on its origin. (1) "The search of an investigator for the Unpardonable Sin;—he at last finds it in his own heart and practice," and (2) "The Unpardonable Sin might consist in a want of love and reverence for the Human Soul, in consequence of which, the investigator pried into its dark depths, not with the hope or purpose of making it better, but from a cold philosophical curiosity,—content that it should be wicked in whatever kind or degree, and only desiring to study it. Would not this, in other words, be the separation of the intellect from the heart?"

Supplementary materials upon which Hawthorne drew for characters and background include notes on observations made while on a visit to North Adams, Massachusetts, during the summer of 1838. See the *American Note-Books* for July 26 to September 9, 1838, for his descriptions of Graylock, of the lime-kiln, Lawyer Giles, the one-armed soapmaker, the German and

chat with the solitary man. It is a lonesome, and, when the character is inclined to thought, may be an intensely thoughtful occupation, as it proved in the case of Ethan Brand, who had mused to such strange purpose, in days gone by, while the fire in this very kiln was burning.

The man who now watched the fire was of a different order, and troubled himself with no thoughts save the very few that were requisite to his business. At frequent intervals, he flung back the clashing weight of the iron door, and turning his face from the insufferable glare, thrust in huge logs of oak, or stoked the immense brands with a long pole. Within the furnace were seen the curling and riotous flames, and the burning marble, almost molten with the intensity of heat, while without, the reflection of the fire quivered on the dark intricacy of the surrounding forest, and showed in the foreground a bright and ruddy little picture of the hut, the spring beside its door, the athletic and coal-begrimed figure of the lime-burner, and the half-frightened child, shrinking into the protection of his father's shadow. And when again the iron door was closed, then reappeared the tender light of the half-full moon, which vainly strove to trace out the indistinct shapes of the neighboring mountains, and, in the upper sky, there was a fitting congregation of clouds, still faintly tinged with the rosy sunset, though thus far down into the valley the sunshine had vanished long and long ago.

The little boy now crept still closer to his father, as footsteps were heard ascending the hillside, and a human form thrust aside the bushes that clustered beneath the trees.

"Halloo! who is it?" cried the lime-burner, vexed at his son's timidity, yet half infected by it. "Come forward, and show yourself, like a man, or I'll fling this chunk of marble at your head!"

"You offer me a rough welcome," said a gloomy voice, as the unknown man drew nigh. "Yet I neither claim nor desire a kinder one, even at my own fireside."

To obtain a distincter view, Bartram threw open the iron door of the kiln, whence immediately issued a gush of fierce light, that smote full upon the stranger's face and figure. To a careless eye there appeared nothing very remarkable in his aspect, which was that of a man in a coarse, brown, country-made suit of clothes, tall and thin, with the staff and heavy shoes of a wayfarer. As he advanced, he fixed

his eyes—which were very bright—intently upon the brightness of the furnace, as if he beheld, or expected to behold, some object worthy of note within it.

"Good evening, stranger," said the lime-burner; "whence come you, so late in the day?"

"I come from my search," answered the wayfarer; "for, at last, it is finished."

"Drunk!—or crazy!" muttered Bartram to himself. "I shall have trouble with the fellow. The sooner I drive him away, the better."

The little boy, all in a tremble, whispered to his father, and begged him to shut the door of the kiln, so that there might not be so much light; for that there was something in the man's face which he was afraid to look at, yet could not look away from. And, indeed, even the lime-burner's dull and torpid sense began to be impressed by an indescribable something in that thin, rugged, thoughtful visage, with the grizzled hair hanging wildly about it, and those deeply sunken eyes, which gleamed like fires within the entrance of a mysterious cavern. But, as he closed the door, the stranger turned towards him, and spoke in a quiet, familiar way, that made Bartram feel as if he were a sane and sensible man, after all.

"Your task draws to an end, I see," said he. "This marble has already been burning three days. A few hours more will convert the stone to lime."

"Why, who are you?" exclaimed the lime-burner. "You seem as well acquainted with my business as I am myself."

"And well I may be," said the stranger, "for I followed the same craft many a long year, and here, too, on this very spot. But you are a new-comer in these parts. Did you never hear of Ethan Brand?"

"The man that went in search of the Unpardonable Sin?" asked Bartram, with a laugh.

"The same," answered the stranger. "He has found what he sought, and therefore he comes back again."

"What! then you are Ethan Brand himself?" cried the lime-burner, in amazement. "I am a new-comer here, as you say, and they call it eighteen years since you left the foot of Graylock. But, I can tell you, the good folks still talk about Ethan Brand, in the village yonder, and what a strange errand took him away from his lime-kiln. Well, and so you have found the Unpardonable Sin?"

"Even so!" said the stranger, calmly.

"If the question is a fair one," proceeded Bartram, "where might it be?"

Ethan Brand laid his finger on his own heart  
 "Here!" replied he

And then, without mirth in his countenance, but as if moved by an involuntary recognition of the infinite absurdity of seeking throughout the world for what was the closest of all things to himself, and looking into every heart, save his own, for what was hidden in no other breast, he broke into a laugh of scorn. It was the same slow, heavy laugh, that had almost appalled the lime-burner when it heralded the wayfarer's approach.

The solitary mountain-side was made dismal by it. Laughter, when out of place, mistimed, or bursting forth from a disordered state of feeling, may be the most terrible modulation of the human voice. The laughter of one asleep, even if it be a little child,—the madman's laugh,—the wild, screaming laugh of a born idiot,—are sounds that we sometimes tremble to hear, and would always willingly forget. Poets have imagined no utterance of fiends or hobgoblins so fearfully appropriate as a laugh. And even the obtuse lime-burner felt his nerves shaken, as this strange man looked inward at his own heart, and burst into laughter that rolled away into the night, and was indistinctly reverberated among the hills.

"Joe," said he to his little son, "scamper down to the tavern in the village, and tell the jolly fellows there that Ethan Brand has come back, and that he has found the Unpardonable Sin!"

The boy darted away on his errand, to which Ethan Brand made no objection, nor seemed hardly to notice it. He sat on a log of wood, looking steadfastly at the iron door of the kiln. When the child was out of sight, and his swift and light footsteps ceased to be heard treading first on the fallen leaves and then on the rocky mountain-path, the lime-burner began to regret his departure. He felt that the little fellow's presence had been a barrier between his guest and himself, and that he must now deal, heart to heart, with a man who, on his own confession, had committed the one only crime for which Heaven could afford no mercy. That crime, in its indistinct blackness, seemed to overshadow him. The lime-burner's own sins rose up within him, and made his memory riotous with a throng of evil shapes that asserted their kindred with the Master Sin, whatever it might be, which it was within the scope of man's corrupted nature to conceive and cherish. They were all of one family, they went to and fro between his

breast and Ethan Brand's, and carried dark greetings from one to the other.

Then Bartram remembered the stories which had grown traditional in reference to this strange man, who had come upon him like a shadow of the night, and was making himself at home in his old place, after so long absence that the dead people, dead and buried for years, would have had more right to be at home, in any familiar spot, than he Ethan Brand, it was said, had conversed with Satan himself in the lurid blaze of this very kiln. The legend had been matter of mirth heretofore, but looked grisly now. According to this tale, before Ethan Brand departed on his search, he had been accustomed to evoke a fiend from the hot furnace of the lime-kiln, night after night, in order to confer with him about the Unpardonable Sin, the man and the fiend each laboring to frame the image of some mode of guilt which could neither be atoned for nor forgiven. And, with the first gleam of light upon the mountain-top, the fiend crept in at the iron door, there to abide the intensest element of fire, until again summoned forth to share in the dreadful task of extending man's possible guilt beyond the scope of Heaven's else infinite mercy.

While the lime-burner was struggling with the horror of these thoughts, Ethan Brand rose from the log, and flung open the door of the kiln. The action was in such accordance with the idea in Bartram's mind, that he almost expected to see the Evil One issue forth, red-hot, from the raging furnace.

"Hold! hold!" cried he, with a tremulous attempt to laugh; for he was ashamed of his fears, although they overmastered him. "Don't, for mercy's sake, bring out your Devil now!"

"Man!" sternly replied Ethan Brand, "what need have I of the Devil? I have left him behind me, on my track. It is with such half-way sinners as you that he busies himself. Fear not, because I open the door. I do but act by old custom, and am going to trim your fire, like a lime-burner, as I was once."

He stirred the vast coals, thrust in more wood, and bent forward to gaze into the hollow prison-house of the fire, regardless of the fierce glow that reddened upon his face. The lime-burner sat watching him, and half suspected this strange guest of a purpose, if not to evoke a fiend, at least to plunge bodily into the flames, and thus vanish from the sight

of man Ethan Brand, however, drew quickly back, and closed the door of the kiln

"I have looked," said he, "into many a human heart that was seven times hotter with sinful passions than yonder furnace is with fire. But I found not there what I sought. No, not the Unpardonable Sin!"

"What is the Unpardonable Sin?" asked the lime-burner, and then he shrank farther from his companion, trembling lest his question should be answered

"It is a sin that grew within my own breast," replied Ethan Brand, standing erect, with a pride that distinguishes all enthusiasts of his stamp. "A sin that grew nowhere else! The sin of an intellect that triumphed over the sense of brotherhood with man and reverence for God, and sacrificed everything to its own mighty claims! The only sin that deserves a recompense of immortal agony! Freely, were it to do again, would I incur the guilt. Unshrinkingly I accept the retribution!"

"The man's head is turned," muttered the lime-burner to himself. "He may be a sinner like the rest of us,—nothing more likely,—but, I'll be sworn, he is a madman too."

Nevertheless, he felt uncomfortable at his situation, alone with Ethan Brand on the wild mountain-side, and was right glad to hear the rough murmur of tongues, and the footsteps of what seemed a pretty numerous party, stumbling over the stones and rustling through the underbrush. Soon appeared the whole lazy regiment that was wont to infest the village tavern, comprehending three or four individuals who had drunk flip beside the bar-room fire through all the winters, and smoked their pipes beneath the stoop through all the summers, since Ethan Brand's departure. Laughing boisterously, and mingling all their voices together in uncereemonious talk, they now burst into the moonshine and narrow streaks of firelight that illuminated the open space before the lime-kiln. Bartram set the door ajar again, flooding the spot with light, that the whole company might get a fair view of Ethan Brand, and he of them.

There, among other old acquaintances, was a once ubiquitous man, now almost extinct, but whom we were formerly sure to encounter at the hotel of every thriving village throughout the country. It was the stage-agent. The present specimen of the genus was a

wilted and smoke-dried man, wrinkled and red-nosed, in a smartly cut, brown, bob-tailed coat, with brass buttons, who, for a length of time unknown, had kept his desk and corner in the bar-room, and was still puffing what seemed to be the same cigar that he had lighted twenty years before. He had great fame as a dry joker, though, perhaps, less on account of any intrinsic humor than from a certain flavor of brandy-toddy and tobacco-smoke, which impregnated all his ideas and expressions, as well as his person. Another well-remembered, though strangely altered, face was that of Lawyer Giles, as people still called him in courtesy, an elderly ragamuffin, in his soiled shirt-sleeves and tow-cloth trousers. This poor fellow had been an attorney, in what he called his better days, a sharp practitioner, and in great vogue among the village litigants, but flip, and sling, and toddy, and cocktails, imbibed at all hours, morning, noon, and night, had caused him to slide from intellectual to various kinds and degrees of bodily labor, till at last, to adopt his own phrase, he slid into a soap-vat. In other words, Giles was now a soap-boiler, in a small way. He had come to be but the fragment of a human being, a part of one foot having been chopped off by an axe, and an entire hand torn away by the devilish grip of a steam-engine. Yet, though the corporeal hand was gone, a spiritual member remained, for, stretching forth the stump, Giles steadfastly averred that he felt an invisible thumb and fingers with as vivid a sensation as before the real ones were amputated. A maimed and miserable wretch he was; but one, nevertheless, whom the world could not trample on, and had no right to scorn, either in this or any previous stage of his misfortunes, since he had still kept up the courage and spirit of a man, asked nothing in charity, and with his one hand—and that the left one—fought a stern battle against want and hostile circumstances.

Among the throng, too, came another personage, who, with certain points of similarity to Lawyer Giles, had many more of difference. It was the village doctor, a man of some fifty years, whom, at an earlier period of his life, we introduced as paying a professional visit to Ethan Brand during the latter's supposed insanity. He was now a purple-visaged, rude, and brutal, yet half-gentlemanly figure, with something wild, ruined, and desperate in his talk, and in all the details of his gesture and manners. Brandy possessed this man like an evil spirit, and made him

as surly and savage as a wild beast, and as miserable as a lost soul, but there was supposed to be in him such wonderful skill, such native gifts of healing, beyond any which medical science could impart, that society caught hold of him, and would not let him sink out of its reach. So, swaying to and fro upon his horse, and grumbling thick accents at the bedside, he visited all the sick-chambers for miles about among the mountain towns, and sometimes raised a dying man, as it were, by miracle, or quite as often, no doubt, sent his patient to a grave that was dug many a year too soon. The doctor had an everlasting pipe in his mouth, and, as somebody said, in allusion to his habit of swearing, it was always alight with hell-fire.

These three worthies pressed forward, and greeted Ethan Brand each after his own fashion, earnestly inviting him to partake of the contents of a certain black bottle, in which, as they averred, he would find something far better worth seeking for than the Unpardonable Sin. No mind, which has wrought itself by intense and solitary meditation into a high state of enthusiasm, can endure the kind of contact with low and vulgar modes of thought and feeling to which Ethan Brand was now subjected. It made him doubt—and, strange to say, it was a painful doubt—whether he had indeed found the Unpardonable Sin, and found it within himself. The whole question on which he had exhausted life, and more than life, looked like a delusion.

"Leave me," he said bitterly, "ye brute beasts, that have made yourselves so, shrivelling up your souls with fiery liquors! I have done with you. Years and years ago, I groped into your hearts, and found nothing there for my purpose. Get ye gone!"

"Why, you uncivil scoundrel," cried the fierce doctor, "is that the way you respond to the kindness of your best friends? Then let me tell you the truth. You have no more found the Unpardonable Sin than yonder boy Joe has. You are but a crazy fellow,—I told you so twenty years ago,—neither better nor worse than a crazy fellow, and the fit companion of old Humphrey, here!"

He pointed to an old man, shabbily dressed, with long white hair, thin visage, and unsteady eyes. For some years past this aged person had been wandering about among the hills, inquiring of all travellers whom he met for his daughter. The girl, it seemed, had gone off with a company of circus-performers;

and occasionally tidings of her came to the village, and fine stories were told of her glittering appearance as she rode on horseback in the ring, or performed marvellous feats on the tight-rope.

The white-haired father now approached Ethan Brand, and gazed unsteadily into his face.

"They tell me you have been all over the earth," said he, wringing his hands with earnestness. "You must have seen my daughter, for she makes a grand figure in the world, and everybody goes to see her. Did she send any word to her old father, or say when she was coming back?"

Ethan Brand's eye quailed beneath the old man's. That daughter, from whom he so earnestly desired a word of greeting, was the Esther of our tale, the very girl whom, with such cold and remorseless purpose, Ethan Brand had made the subject of a psychological experiment, and wasted, absorbed, and perhaps annihilated her soul, in the process.

"Yes," murmured he, turning away from the hoary wanderer, "it is no delusion. There is an Unpardonable Sin!"

While these things were passing, a merry scene was going forward in the area of cheerful light, beside the spring and before the door of the hut. A number of the youth of the village, young men and girls, had hurried up the hillside, impelled by curiosity to see Ethan Brand, the hero of so many a legend familiar to their childhood. Finding nothing, however, very remarkable in his aspect,—nothing but a sunburnt wayfarer, in plain garb and dusty shoes, who sat looking into the fire as if he fancied pictures among the coals,—these young people speedily grew tired of observing him. As it happened, there was other amusement at hand. An old German Jew, travelling with a diorama on his back, was passing down the mountain-road towards the village just as the party turned aside from it, and, in hopes of cking out the profits of the day, the showman had kept them company to the lime-kiln.

"Come, old Dutchman," cried one of the young men, "let us see your pictures, if you can swear they are worth looking at!"

"Oh, yes, Captain," answered the Jew,—whether as a matter of courtesy or craft, he styled everybody Captain,—"I shall show you, indeed, some very superb pictures!"

So, placing his box in a proper position, he invited the young men and girls to look through the glass

orifices of the machine, and proceeded to exhibit a series of the most outrageous scatchings and daubings, as specimens of the fine arts, that ever an itinerant showman had the face to impose upon his circle of spectators. The pictures were worn out, moreover, tattered, full of cracks and wrinkles, dingy with tobacco-smoke, and otherwise in a most pitiable condition. Some purported to be cities, public edifices, and ruined castles in Europe, others represented Napoleon's battles and Nelson's sea-fights, and in the midst of these would be seen a gigantic, brown, hairy hand,—which might have been mistaken for the Hand of Destiny, though, in truth, it was only the showman's,—pointing its forefinger to various scenes of the conflict, while its owner gave historical illustrations. When, with much merriment at its abominable deficiency of merit, the exhibition was concluded, the German bade little Joe put his head into the box. Viewed through the magnifying-glasses, the boy's round, rosy visage assumed the strangest imaginable aspect of an immense Titanic child, the mouth grinning broadly, and the eyes and every other feature overflowing with fun at the joke. Suddenly, however, that merry face turned pale, and its expression changed to horror, for this easily impressed and excitable child had become sensible that the eye of Ethan Brand was fixed upon him through the glass.

"You make the little man to be afraid, Captain," said the German Jew, turning up the dark and strong outline of his visage, from his stooping posture. "But look again, and, by chance, I shall cause you to see somewhat that is very fine, upon my word!"

Ethan Brand gazed into the box for an instant, and then starting back, looked fixedly at the German. What had he seen? Nothing, apparently; for a curious youth, who had peeped in almost at the same moment, beheld only a vacant space of canvas.

"I remember you now," muttered Ethan Brand to the showman.

"Ah, Captain," whispered the Jew of Nuernberg, with a dark smile, "I find it to be a heavy matter in my show-box,—this Unpardonable Sin! By my faith, Captain, it has wearied my shoulders, this long day, to carry it over the mountain."

"Peace," answered Ethan Brand, sternly, "or get thee into the furnace yonder!"

The Jew's exhibition had scarcely concluded, when a great elderly dog—who seemed to be his own mas-

ter, as no person in the company laid claim to him—saw fit to render himself the object of public notice. Hitherto, he had shown himself a very quiet, well-disposed old dog, going round from one to another, and, by way of being sociable, offering his rough head to be patted by any kindly hand that would take so much trouble. But now, all of a sudden, this grave and venerable quadruped, of his own mere motion, and without the slightest suggestion from anybody else, began to run round after his tail, which, to heighten the absurdity of the proceeding, was a great deal shorter than it should have been. Never was seen such headlong eagerness in pursuit of an object that could not possibly be attained, never was heard such a tremendous outbreak of growling, snarling, barking, and snapping,—as if one end of the ridiculous brute's body were at deadly and most unforgivable enmity with the other. Faster and faster, round about went the cur, and faster and still faster fled the unapproachable brevity of his tail, and louder and fiercer grew his yells of rage and animosity, until, utterly exhausted, and as far from the goal as ever, the foolish old dog ceased his performance as suddenly as he had begun it. The next moment he was as mild, quiet, sensible, and respectable in his deportment, as when he first scraped acquaintance with the company.

As may be supposed, the exhibition was greeted with universal laughter, clapping of hands, and shouts of encore, to which the canine performer responded by wagging all that there was to wag of his tail, but appeared totally unable to repeat his very successful effort to amuse the spectators.

Meanwhile, Ethan Brand had resumed his seat upon the log, and moved, it might be, by a perception of some remote analogy between his own case and that of this self-pursuing cur, he broke into the awful laugh, which, more than any other token, expressed the condition of his inward being. From that moment, the merriment of the party was at an end; they stood aghast, dreading lest the inauspicious sound should be reverberated around the horizon, and that mountain would thunder it to mountain, and so the horror be prolonged upon their ears. Then, whispering one to another that it was late,—that the moon was almost down,—that the August night was growing chill,—they hurried homewards, leaving the lime-burner and little Joe to deal as they might with their unwelcome guest. Save for these three human



beings, the open space on the hillside was a solitude, set in a vast gloom of forest. Beyond that darksome verge, the firelight glimmered on the stately trunks and almost black foliage of pines, intermixed with the lighter verdure of sapling oaks, maples and poplars, while here and there lay the gigantic corpses of dead trees, decaying on the leaf-strewn soil. And it seemed to little Joe—a timorous and imaginative child—that the silent forest was holding its breath until some fearful thing should happen.

Ethan Brand thrust more wood into the fire, and closed the door of the kiln; then looking over his shoulder at the lime-burner and his son, he bade, rather than advised, them to retire to rest.

"For myself, I cannot sleep," said he. "I have matters that it concerns me to meditate upon. I will watch the fire, as I used to do in the old time."

"And call the Devil out of the furnace to keep you company, I suppose," muttered Bartram, who had been making intimate acquaintance with the black bottle above mentioned. "But watch, if you like, and call as many devils as you like! For my part, I shall be all the better for a snooze. Come, Joe!"

As the boy followed his father into the hut, he looked back at the wayfarer, and the tears came into his eyes, for his tender spirit had an intuition of the bleak and terrible loneliness in which this man had enveloped himself.

When they had gone, Ethan Brand sat listening to the crackling of the kindled wood, and looking at the little spirits of fire that issued through the chinks of the door. These trifles, however, once so familiar, had but the slightest hold of his attention, while deep within his mind he was reviewing the gradual but marvellous change that had been wrought upon him by the search to which he had devoted himself. He remembered how the night dew had fallen upon him,—how the dark forest had whispered to him,—how the stars had gleamed upon him,—a simple and loving man, watching his fire in the years gone by, and ever musing as it burned. He remembered with what tenderness, with what love and sympathy for mankind, and what pity for human guilt and woe, he had first begun to contemplate those ideas which afterwards became the inspiration of his life; with what reverence he had then looked into the heart of man, viewing it as a temple originally divine, and, however desecrated, still to be held sacred by a brother; with what awful fear he had deprecated the

success of his pursuit, and prayed that the Unpardonable Sin might never be revealed to him. Then ensued that vast intellectual development, which, in its progress, disturbed the countenance between his mind and heart. The Idea that possessed his life had operated as a means of education, it had gone on cultivating his powers to the highest point of which they were susceptible, it had raised him from the level of an unlettered laborer to stand on a star-lit eminence, whither the philosophers of the earth, laden with the lore of universities, might vainly strive to clamber after him. So much for the intellect! But where was the heart? That, indeed, had withered,—had contracted,—had hardened,—had perished! It had ceased to partake of the universal throb. He had lost his hold of the magnetic chain of humanity. He was no longer a brother-man, opening the chambers or the dungeons of our common nature by the key of holy sympathy, which gave him a right to share in all its secrets; he was now a cold observer, looking on mankind as the subject of his experiment, and, at length, converting man and woman to be his puppets, and pulling the wires that moved them to such degrees of crime as were demanded for his study.

Thus Ethan Brand became a fiend. He began to be so from the moment that his moral nature had ceased to keep the pace of improvement with his intellect. And now, as his highest effort and inevitable development,—as the bright and gorgeous flower, and rich, delicious fruit of his life's labor,—he had produced the Unpardonable Sin!

"What more have I to seek? what more to achieve?" said Ethan Brand to himself. "My task is done, and well done!"

Starting from the log with a certain alacrity in his gait and ascending the hillock of earth that was raised against the stone circumference of the lime-kiln, he thus reached the top of the structure. It was a space of perhaps ten feet across, from edge to edge, presenting a view of the upper surface of the immense mass of broken marble with which the kiln was heaped. All these innumerable blocks and fragments of marble were red-hot and vividly on fire, sending up great spouts of blue flame, which quivered aloft and danced madly, as within a magic circle, and sank and rose again, with continual and multitudinous activity. As the lonely man bent forward over this terrible body of fire, the blasting heat smote up against his person with a breath that, it might be

supposed, would have scorched and shrivelled him up in a moment.

Ethan Brand stood erect, and raised his arms on high. The blue flames played upon his face, and imparted the wild and ghastly light which alone could have suited its expression, it was that of a fiend on the verge of plunging into his gulf of intensest torment.

"O Mother Earth," cried he, "who art no more my Mother, and into whose bosom this frame shall never be resolved! O mankind, whose brotherhood I have cast off, and trampled thy great heart beneath my feet! O stars of heaven, that shone on me of old, as if to light me onward and upward!—farewell all, and forever. Come, deadly element of Fire,—henceforth my familiar frame! Embrace me, as I do thee!"

That night the sound of a fearful peal of laughter rolled heavily through the sleep of the lime-burner and his little son, dim shapes of horror and anguish haunted their dreams, and seemed still present in the rude hovel, when they opened their eyes to the daylight.

"Up, boy, up!" cried the lime-burner, staring about him. "Thank Heaven, the night is gone, at last, and rather than pass such another, I would watch my lime-kiln, wide awake, for a twelvemonth. This Ethan Brand, with his bumbag of an Unpardonable Sin, has done me no such mighty favor, in taking my place!"

He issued from the hut, followed by little Joe, who kept fast hold of his father's hand. The early sunshine was already pouring its gold upon the mountain-tops, and though the valleys were still in shadow, they smiled cheerfully in the promise of the bright day that was hastening onward. The village, completely shut in by hills, which swelled away gently about it, looked as if it had rested peacefully in the hollow of the great hand of Providence. Every dwelling was distinctly visible; the little spires of the two churches pointed upwards, and caught a fore-glimmering of brightness from the sun-gilt skies upon their gilded weathercocks. The tavern was astir, and the figure of the old, smoke-dried stage-agent, cigar in mouth, was seen beneath the stoop. Old Graylock was glorified with a golden cloud upon his head. Scattered likewise over the breasts of the surrounding mountains, there were heaps of hoary mist, in fantastic shapes, some of them far down into the

valley, others high up towards the summits, and still others, of the same family of mist or cloud, hovering in the gold radiance of the upper atmosphere. Stepping from one to another of the clouds that rested on the hills, and thence to the loftier brotherhood that sailed in air, it seemed almost as if a mortal man might thus ascend into the heavenly regions. Earth was so mingled with sky that it was a day-dream to look at it.

To supply that chain of the familiar and homely, which Nature so readily adopts into a scene like this, the stage coach was rattling down the mountain-road, and the driver sounded his horn, while Echo caught up the notes, and interwined them into a rich and varied and elaborate harmony, of which the original performer could lay claim to little share. The great hills played a concert among themselves, each contributing a strain of any sweetness.

Little Joe's face brightened at once.

"Dear father," cried he, skipping cheerily to and fro, "that strange man is gone, and the sky and the mountains all seem glad of it!"

"Yes," growled the lime-burner, with an oath, "but he has let the fire go down, and no thanks to him five hundred bushels of lime are not spoiled. If I catch the fellow hereabouts again, I shall feel like tossing him into the furnace!"

With his long pole in his hand, he ascended to the top of the kiln. After a moment's pause, he called to his son.

"Come up here, Joe!" said he.

So little Joe ran up the hillock, and stood by his father's side. The marble was all burnt into perfect, snow-white lime. But on its surface, in the midst of the circle,—snow-white too, and thoroughly converted into lime,—lay a human skeleton, in the attitude of a person who, after long toil, lies down to long repose. Within the ribs—strange to say—was the shape of a human heart.

"Was the fellow's heart made of marble?" cried Bartram, in some perplexity at this phenomenon. "At any rate, it is burnt into what looks like special good lime; and, taking all the bones together, my kiln is half a bushel the richer for him."

So saying, the rude lime-burner lifted his pole, and, letting it fall upon the skeleton, the relics of Ethan Brand were crumbled into fragments.

January 5, 1850

(London, 1851), 1852

## EDGAR ALLAN POE (1809-1849)

Edgar Allan Poe, generally regarded the best exponent of romanticism in nineteenth-century America, remains to many an enigmatical figure. As in the case of Byron, people writing about Poe have found it difficult to write impersonally and objectively. At the one extreme are his defamers, beginning with his first biographer, the Rev. Rufus W. Griswold, who regarded him as a perverse neurotic, a drunkard and drug addict, lacking both emotional stability and moral integrity. On the other side are his apologists, who relate all his difficulties to the malignity of his opponents, the hard circumstances which the times imposed on a literary aesthete, or the bodily and mental ailments that plagued him. And in between these two extremes all the gradations are represented by students bent on finding special psychoses, neuroses, frustrations, and other pathological, social, or economic causes to explain Poe's unique personality and his tragic life. Among them, they have built up about the figure of Poe a contradictory mass of fact and fiction that leaves the uninitiated bewildered.

The beginning student of Poe falls altogether too easily into the error of overestimating the influence upon Poe of alcohol and opium, especially since Poe, like other romanticists, sometimes indulged in that peculiar perversity which prompted him to let fall hints about himself that led people to consider him far worse than he actually was. But there is some truth in the observation of one of his critics who said that no greater injustice can be done to the memory of Poe than to acquit him wholly of the very vices that made his personality so fascinating and at the same time contributed so much to his genius.

The sensible view is to regard him as neither wholly angel nor devil, introvert nor pervert, but simply as a man with extraordinary literary and mental capabilities and equally large personal failings, who dedicated himself to literary pursuits, and who sought to make his livelihood by writing. Considering his weaknesses and the difficulties that beset the book business at the time, the wonder is rather that he wrote so much than that he wrote no more during his brief lifetime. While it may freely be admitted that between the few poems, stories, and critiques

that measured up to his own strict literary ideals, there are dreary stretches of humdrum hack-work—the result often of the journalistic demands of meeting deadlines—there are, nevertheless, a score of superb poems, a like number of first-rate stories, and half as many pieces of fundamental criticism that nothing short of real literary genius could have produced. These deservedly live, whatever objections the moralist may raise to Poe's personal failings, and whatever shortcomings the critic may see in Poe's literary theory and practice. The seventeen volumes of his collected writings (in the standard Virginia edition) bear evidence that Poe drove ahead, through illness, frustration, poverty, despair, and plain hard luck, with a steadfastness that is truly amazing. The remarkable literary purposefulness and the energetic drive of the man are too often obscured by the legend of abnormality and oddity which a tradition of prejudicial special pleading, pro and con, as built round the more vital and essential Poe, who, of all the men of his generation, stuck most devotedly to his ideal of a literary life. In the year of his death, when the gold-rush fever affected less adventuresome spirits than his, he reiterated his faith, in a letter to his friend F. W. Thomas:

Depend upon it, Thomas, literature is the most noble of professions. In fact, it is about the only one fit for a man. For my own part there is no seducing me from the path. I shall be a *littérateur* at least, all my life, nor would I abandon the hopes which still lead me on for all the gold of California. Talking of gold and the temptations at present held out to "poor-devil authors" did it ever strike you that all that is really valuable to a man of letters—to a poet in especial—is absolutely unpurchasable? Love, fame, the dominion of intellect, the consciousness of power, the thrilling sense of beauty, the free air of Heaven, exercise of body & mind—these and such as these are really all that a poet cares for. . . .

His literary contemporaries, the major New England writers of the nineteenth century, differed from him in being not wholly dependent on their pens for a livelihood. Moreover, most of them were well-born and enjoyed a secure social status. And since they set the moral tone of what was expected of a literary man, not only in his productions but also

of his personal life, Poe's refusal to mix morality with aesthetics and his aberrations from the accepted code of conduct often caused his critics to pass strictures upon him which he would have escaped in a more liberal age. Poe was born a hundred years before J. E. Spingarn, speaking for a more generous attitude toward the poet and his poetry, told Americans that the poet's "only moral duty, as a poet, is to be true to his art, and to express his vision of reality as well as he can." That doctrine Poe understood perfectly, but no one else in the America of his day supported him in it. Instead, New England, with its moralistic inhibitions or reticences, sat as moral arbiter of taste and demanded conformity where Poe's firm conviction was that morality had no jurisdiction in the first place. Himself a Bostonian by birth, Poe grew bitter at the censorious proscriptions of the ingrained Puritanic temperament of the New England tradition, and spoke contemptuously of his native city as the "Frogpond." Striking out savagely at literary cliques of which he, a starveling journalist and a social outsider, was not and could never be a member—the type of literary fraternity which Holmes referred to with self-evident satisfaction as "Our Mutual Admiration Society"—Poe resolved to "make war to the knife against the New England assumption of 'All the decency and all the talent' which has been so disgustingly manifested in the Rev. Rufus W. Griswold's 'Poets and Poetry of America'." They retaliated in ways that infuriated him all the more. The revered Longfellow at Craigie House chose to ignore his attacks altogether, and even the benign sage of Concord disposed of him with the glib phrase, "the jungle man." Poe's proud nature could stand anything better than to be brushed aside or to be ignored altogether. And so he pursued his solitary way, slashing about him and charging his trials and tribulations to the malignity of others, only to make himself thoroughly unhappy, while the mad world rushed past him heedlessly. He never attained to the wisdom of realizing that in many instances he was himself his own worst enemy, choosing instead to take whatever meager consolation he could find in such thoughts as he expressed in the following paragraphs from the *Marginalia*, written during the last year of his life.

I have sometimes amused myself by endeavoring to fancy what would be the fate of any individual gifted, or rather accursed, with an intellect very far superior to that of his race. Of course, he would be conscious of his superiority; nor could he (if otherwise constituted as man is) help manifesting his consciousness. Thus he would make himself enemies at all points. And since his opinions and speculations would widely differ from those of *all* mankind

—that he would be considered a madman, is evident. How horribly painful such a condition! Hell could invent no greater torture than that of being charged with abnormal weakness on account of being abnormally strong.

This subject is a painful one indeed. That individuals *have* so soared above the plane of their race, is scarcely to be questioned, but, in looking back through history for traces of their existence, we should pass over all biographies of "the good and the great," while we search carefully the slight records of wretches who died in prison, in Bedlam, or upon the gallows.

The beginning of Poe's life, like the end, was attended by misfortune. Born in Boston, on January 19, 1809, of poor actor parents, he was left an orphan at the age of two, while his parents were playing in Richmond, Virginia. He was taken into the childless home of John Allan, a well-to-do tobacco merchant of Richmond, who became Poe's legal guardian, but never formally adopted him. Thus began the anomalous position by which Poe was reared in the indulgent atmosphere of Southern gentility, only to make the discovery some years later, after he had reached the height of his illusions as a Southern gentleman, that he was not and would never be really a member of the caste.

During 1815-20, while the Allans lived in England, Poe enjoyed the advantages of a good preparatory education in the Manor House School at Stoke Newington for several years, and on their return, he was sent to a good academy in Richmond. During the years between 1820 and 1826, favored treatment, special tutoring, and other privileges commonly accorded the lads of wealthy Southern gentlemen led Poe to assume and to demand the special favors belonging to the privileged. This was the period when he read widely in romantic poetry and developed a romantic attachment for Mrs. Jane Stith Stanard, the mother of one of his schoolmates, whose death in 1824 left him disconsolate, and to whom he later addressed the poem "To Helen" in commemoration of what he called "the first purely ideal love of my soul." Toward the end of the period he became "engaged" to Sarah Elmira Royster of Richmond.

While Poe was in his middle teens rifts were already developing between the practical-minded Allan and his artistically-inclined foster-son—quarrels which appear to have begun over Poe's waywardness of spirit and over his choice of a calling—quarrels which Mrs. Allan sought to assuage. During the calendar year of 1826, while Poe was at the University of Virginia, the letters between him and Miss Royster were intercepted by her parents, presumably because they had learned that Allan did not intend to make

Poe his heir. Miss Royster was accordingly bestowed upon a young man whose prospects were more promising, while Poe was left to nurture his hurt until it found expression in the romantic conceptions and Byronic disillusionments of such poems as "Tamerlane," "Dreams," "Spirits of the Dead," "A Dream within a Dream," and "Song," beginning, "I saw thee on thy bridal day." Allan's parsimony in failing to provide Poe with sufficient money for his fees and other necessities further complicated life for Poe. In desperation he took to drinking and gambling, only to make matters worse. If anything had been wanting to complete the rupture between Allan and his foster-son, it was supplied by Poe's ending his year at Charlottesville with accumulated debts in excess of \$2,000—most of them representing gambling losses. When Allan refused to assume responsibility for these obligations, Poe, compelled to repudiate his debts "of honor," could not have returned to school and face his creditors even if he had wanted to. Other bitter quarrels followed when Poe refused to go to work as a clerk in Allan's counting house, and in March of 1827, Poe, in defiance of the code of his class, made his way to Boston and enlisted in the army as a common soldier. He was stationed for a time in Charleston, South Carolina, where he became familiar with the background of "The Gold Bug." On Mrs. Allan's death in 1829, Allan took Poe back into his good graces, secured his dismissal from the army (where Poe had risen to the rank of regimental sergeant-major), and helped him get an appointment to West Point, where Poe entered on July 1, 1830. Although he stood well in his classes, he found life at the Military Academy increasingly uncongenial, and by March of 1831 he had collected enough deliberately incurred demerits to effect his court-martial and dismissal. He went to Baltimore to live, chiefly at the home of his aunt, Mrs. Maria Clemm, and tried to make his livelihood as best he could by writing. If he still entertained any hopes of getting anything from Allan, those hopes were blasted by Allan's second marriage, in 1832. Having now the prospect of a direct heir, and having decided that Poe was a confirmed ne'er-do-well, Allan disowned him. In 1834, when Allan died, Poe discovered that he had not been left so much as a blessing.

Thus he found himself penniless, discouraged, generally ill-prepared, and with very few friends, to shift for himself. In 1827, shortly before enlisting in the army, he had published in Boston his first volume of verse, *Tamerlane and Other Poems, By a Bostonian*. This was followed in 1829 by *Al Aaraaf*,

*Tamerlane, and Minor Poems*, and immediately after his dismissal from West Point appeared a volume to which his classmates, expecting lampoons of their instructors and other tasty morsels, had subscribed—entitled simply *Poems*. These early volumes, redolent of the romantic notes inspired by Coleridge, Byron, Scott, and Moore, called some attention to his name, but brought him no material rewards. Accordingly he turned his attention to prose fiction as possessing better possibilities, but with little success until 1833, when the "MS Found in a Bottle" won a \$100 prize in a contest conducted by the Baltimore *Saturday Visitor*. For the rest, he drudged at hack-work, while trying desperately to find regular editorial employment where there was none to be had. Mary Devereaux, a pretty red-headed belle of the day, to whom he paid court, later described Poe as he appeared during his early Baltimore period:

Mr Poe was about five feet eight inches tall, and had dark, almost black hair, which he wore long and brushed back in student style over his ears. It was as fine as silk. His eyes were large and full, gray and piercing. He was entirely clean shaven. His nose was long and straight, and his features finely cut. The expression about his mouth was beautiful. He was pale and had no color. His skin was of a clear, beautiful olive. He had a sad, melancholy look. He was very slender . . . but he had a fine figure, an erect military carriage, and a quick step. But it was his manner that most charmed. It was *elegant*. When he looked at you it seemed as if he could read your thoughts. His voice was pleasant and musical but not deep. He always wore a black frock-coat buttoned up, with a cadet or military collar, a low turned-over shirt collar, and a black cravat tied in a loose knot. He did not follow the fashions, but had a style of his own. His was a loose way of dressing as if he didn't care. You would know that he was very different from the ordinary run of young men.

Another characterization which fits this picture comes from the pen of John Pendleton Kennedy, then the commanding literary figure in Baltimore, who was attracted to Poe by the "MS Found in a Bottle" to befriend and support him and, in 1835, to secure his appointment as assistant editor of the *Southern Literary Messenger* in Richmond. Writing to Thomas W. White, the owner of the *Messenger*, Kennedy said:

Poe did right in referring to me. He is very clever with his pen—classical and scholar-like. He wants experience and direction, but I have no doubt he can be made very useful to you. And, poor fellow, he is *very poor* . . . The young fellow is highly imaginative and a little *terrific*. He is at work upon a tragedy [*Politian*], but I have turned him to drudging upon whatever may make money.

After five years of a hand-to-mouth existence in Baltimore, Poe was happy to find a haven and regular employment in Richmond. Following a secret marriage to his cousin, Virginia Clemm, the year before, a second, public ceremony took place in 1836, Virginia aged thirteen, Poe aged twenty-seven. Together with Virginia and her mother ("dear Muddy," as he called her, the guardian angel of the little family), he set out in Richmond upon a promising editorial career, rising, before the year was out, to the position of editor. Henceforth his life was intimately associated with journalism. His stories, poems, and critiques appeared in no less than forty-seven different periodicals, while he served in an editorial capacity for five magazines. Indeed, he was, for the rest of his life, a journalist, who early conceived the desire to found and publish a journal of his own that should rise above the common level. From 1836 onward almost everything he did can be related to this commanding ambition, and several times he came near attaining it.

His own poems and stories in the *Southern Literary Messenger* soon attracted attention to the magazine, and his trenchant, if too sharp, critical essays soon established it as the leading review in the South, while its subscription list rose, in a year's time, from seven hundred to nearly five thousand. Although he still lacked anything like a well-considered or consistent body of critical principles, his criticisms were, from the first, forceful and sometimes slashing in the manner of the Edinburgh reviewers. He made relentless war on mediocrity and rendered real service to the cause of American letters by enforcing strict and high literary standards, exposing "puffery" wherever he encountered it, attacking the "hecsy of the didactic" in literature, and discovering plagiarism, even where there was none. In the end he ran into difficulties with White, who objected to Poe's severity as a critic and to his over-working the vein of horror in his stories. Poe's reply to White's objections to "Berenice" as being too terrible is illuminating as indicating that Poe was consciously schooling himself for the career of a journalist.

A word or two in relation to Berenice. Your opinion of it is quite just. The subject is far too horrible . . . [But] the history of all magazines shows plainly that those which obtained celebrity were indebted for it to *articles similar in nature to Berenice*. . . . You ask me in what does that nature consist . . . in the ludicrous heightened into the grotesque, the fearful colored into the horrible; the witty exaggerated into the burlesque; and the singular heightened into the strange and mystical. . . . You may well say that all this is in bad taste. I have my doubts about it. . . . But whether the articles . . . are in bad taste is of

little purpose. To be appreciated you must be *read* and these things are sought after with avidity. . . . The effect—if any—will be estimated better by the circulation of the magazine than by any comments on its contents.

Although his friends claimed that Poe left the *Southern Literary Messenger* late in 1836 to accept a more lucrative and congenial position in New York, the truth seems to be that, having come to consider himself indispensable to the magazine and having grown imperious in his demands, Poe began to get lax in his habits and to absent himself from his desk during drinking sprees, whereupon White dismissed him. At all events, when he showed up in New York, early in 1837, no editorial position awaited him. But he wrote steadily, published a good deal in various periodicals, and in July, 1838, Harper's brought out *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*, a Crusoe-like sea story of the type for which there was a good deal of demand at the time.

In the summer of 1838 Poe removed to Philadelphia, where he lived for the next six years, and where he soon undertook the editorship of Burton's *Gentleman's Magazine*. Here the story of the *Southern Literary Messenger* repeated itself. Again finding himself successful, Poe's methods and habits provoked difficulties between himself and his employer, until Burton wrote him "I cannot permit the magazine to be made a vehicle for that sort of severity which you think is so 'successful with the mob.' I am truly much less anxious about making a monthly 'sensation' than I am upon the point of fairness. . . . You say the people love havoc. I think they love justice."

At opposite poles in editorial policy, Burton and Poe parted company in the summer of 1840, for when Poe showed up several times more or less intoxicated, Burton fired him. But he was not long out of employment. In April, 1841, he became editor of *Graham's Magazine*, founded the preceding January. At no time was Poe's mind clearer or his pen surer than during this phase of his Philadelphia period. Thrilling stories and trenchant critical essays followed one another in rapid succession, while his articles on cryptography and autography attracted widespread attention. But in thirteen months Poe had once again outstayed his welcome. During 1843 he was associated for a while with the weekly *Saturday Museum*, and the next year he moved to New York, which remained his home until his death in 1849.

In the meantime he had published a collection of his stories under the title *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque* (1840), and in 1843 he had won a popular success and a \$100 prize with the story of "The

Gold Bug." His first regular employment in New York was as assistant editor of the *Evening Mirror*, of which N. P. Willis was editor. It was in this periodical that Poe's "Raven" first appeared on January 29, 1845. The poem immediately laid hold of the popular fancy and met a success such as no other American poem had ever won. Even abroad, it made its mark, and Elizabeth Barrett Browning wrote, "This vivid writing, this power *which is felt*, has produced a sensation here in England. Some of my friends are taken by the fear of it, and some by the music. I hear of persons who are haunted by the 'Nevermore', and an acquaintance of mine, who has the misfortune of possessing a bust of Pallas, cannot bear to look at it in the twilight."

Poe's position on the *Evening Mirror* was too frankly subordinate to last long, and in 1845, at about the same time that his *Raven and Other Poems* appeared, he changed over, with the best of feelings, to the weekly *Broadway Journal* as associate editor. He soon became the editor, and in October, 1846, he finally realized his ambition of becoming the owner of a periodical. But his best editorial labors and frantic efforts to borrow money were not enough to keep the declining *Journal* from dying on his hands during the first week of the new year.

The rest of the story is a sad one. After many changes of residence in New York City, the Poes moved to Fordham (now in the Bronx). In desperate straits, Poe was mortified to learn that a public appeal for charity was made in his behalf. In 1841 Virginia Poe had broken a blood vessel while singing, consumption had followed, and she remained an invalid until her death on January 30, 1847. Poe, distraught and disconsolate, fell ill, and resumed some of his bad habits, resorting now to opium as well as to other stimulants, while Mrs. Clemm labored heroically to save him. He pulled himself together to write such poems as "Ulalume" and in 1848 he finished *Eureka*, a "prosepoem," designed to explain the constitution of the universe in physical-metaphysical terms. For the rest, he did some lecturing, reading such essays of his as "The Philosophy of Composition" and "The Poetic Principle," which embodied his mature theories of poetry and prose fiction. In his almost hysterical eagerness for feminine sympathy, he became involved in sentimental relations with women like Mrs. Osgood, Mrs. Shew, and Mrs. Whitman, all of whom, however, broke their engagements with him when they realized that he could not keep his promises to correct his irregular habits.

Finally in 1849 it appeared that he was about to

realize his ambition to found a journal on a sound financial footing. His earlier efforts in Philadelphia to establish *The Penn*, also called *The Stylus*, had come to naught, and the *Broadway Journal* never had a chance under his direction. But he clung to his aim. "Touching 'The Stylus,'" he wrote to Philip Pendleton Cooke, "this is the one great purpose of my literary life. . . I wish to establish a journal in which men of genius may fight their battles, upon some terms of equality, with those dunces, the men of talent." Even "The Gold Bug" and "The Raven," his two greatest literary successes, appear to have been conceived and written especially to establish for himself a commanding reputation. Writing to F. W. Thomas, Poe said, "The Raven" has had a great 'run' . . . but I wrote it for the express purpose of *running*, just as I did the 'Gold Bug,' you know. The bird beat the bug, though, all hollow." Here speaks the journalist bent on writing something that will have a run, something that will draw attention to his name. With this purpose in mind, Poe's efforts at reputation-building sometimes turned out to be his best pieces, at other times, of course, his purposeful departures from his own high ideals, in order to write down to the level of the public taste, resulted in less felicitous productions. To Charles Anthon he confided in 1844

Holding steadily in view my ultimate purpose,—to found a Magazine of my own, or in which at least I might have a proprietary right,—it has been my constant endeavour in the meantime, not so much to establish a reputation great in itself as one of that particular character which should best further my special objects, and draw attention to my exertions as Editor of a Magazine. Thus I have written no books, and have been so far essentially a Magazinst bearing, not only willingly but cheerfully, sad poverty and the thousand consequent contumelies and other ills which the condition of the mere Magazinst entails upon him in America . . .

My sole immediate object is the furtherance of my ultimate one. I believe that if I could get my tales fairly before the public, and thus have an opportunity of eliciting foreign as well as native opinion respecting them, I should by their means be in a far more advantageous position than at present in regard to the establishment of a Magazine.

Finally, in 1849, when the well-to-do Edward Howard Norton Patterson appeared and it seemed that Poe had at last found a patron ready to back *The Stylus*, Poe's high hopes revived. Referring to his earlier efforts, he wrote:

I could see no reason why a Magazine, if worthy of the name, could not be made to circulate among 20,000 subscribers, embracing the best intellect and education of the land. This was a thought which stimulated my fancy and



my ambition. The influence of such a journal would be vast indeed, and I dreamed of honestly employing that influence in the sacred cause of the beautiful, the just and the true

Now that the dream was about to come true, he wrote to Patterson of his high hopes: "We must aim high—address the intellect—the higher classes—of the country (with reference, also, to a certain amount of foreign circulation) and put the work at \$5 . . . Such a Mag would exercise a literary and other influence never yet exercised in America"

This was written in April of 1849. Two months later he made a journey to Richmond to deliver some lectures en route and to settle some affairs of business, after which he planned to return to New York, when everything would be in readiness for the establishment of *The Stylus*. From that journey he never returned. In Richmond he became engaged to be married to Sarah Elmira Royster Shelton, then a wealthy widow. Late in September he started north to bring Mrs. Clemm to Richmond. In Baltimore he took to drink, fell into the hands of unscrupulous politicians, who, it is believed, drugged him, used him as a "repeater" at several of the polls of the election then in progress, and then abandoned him in the back-room of a tavern, which also served as an election place. He may also have been robbed and manhandled. It is possible that his death was caused by illness and delirium aggravated by drink. The circumstances attending his last days are far from clear. He died on October 7, 1849, at the age of forty. Two days after his death, there appeared in the *New York Tribune* a brief notice over the signature of "Ludwig," masking the name of the Rev. Rufus W. Griswold, whom Poe had known since his Philadelphia days, and whom he had trustingly appointed his literary executor. This notice of Poe's passing initiated the alternate vilification and glorification of his character that has gone on without abatement ever since:

Edgar Allan Poe is dead. He died in Baltimore the day before yesterday. This announcement will startle many, *but few will be grieved by it*. The poet was known personally or by reputation, in all this country; he had readers in England, and in several of the states of Continental Europe; *but he had few or no friends*; and the regret for his death will be suggested principally by the consideration that in him literary art lost one of its most brilliant but erratic stars.

~A professed aesthete and a meticulous craftsman, Poe left his mark on American verse with a notably small body of poetry. The range of his ideas is as narrow as his technical excellence is great. No poet

who wrote so little rewrote that little so often, and so successfully. Killis Campbell's careful research in Poe reveals that of the forty-eight poems collected by Poe, no fewer than forty-two were republished at least once. Of the latter, all but one ("Sonnet to Zantho") were subjected to some sort of verbal revision on republication. SIX appeared in two different versions, thirteen in three different forms, nine occur in four different forms, eleven show five different readings, one ("Lenore") shows eight different renditions, and another ("The Raven") appeared in fifteen different forms. Three of the six poems that were published only once survive in manuscript versions that differ in some respects from the published version; while twenty of the forty-eight poems underwent a change of title, five of them changing title twice.

As a poet he adhered with remarkable consistency to his theory of verse as enunciated in his preface to the 1831 edition of his *Poems*: "Music, when combined with a pleasurable idea, is poetry." His earlier poems are illustrations of his faith that the writing of verse is almost exclusively a feelingful, emotional process, in which taste is the sole arbiter and beauty the only legitimate province. Subsequently he admitted the intellect and the moral sense to have at least collateral relations. As he progressed in his critical editorial work to seek for the unifying principles of art, unity itself became increasingly important—unity of interest, unity of impression, unity of form, and as he turned to the ratiocinative tales, his more ingenious concoctions, and finally to *Eureka*, in which he sought to explain the entire universe by the principle of unity rationally conceived, he attached increasing importance to the reason, ultimately concluding that the reason must play a complementary rôle to the poetic imagination. Still regarding poetry as "the Rhythmical Creation of Beauty," he came in the end to think of the more formal, rational principle as equally essential with the emotional and imaginative elements. The fusion of the deliberative and conscious processes with the intuitive and imaginative faculties he sought to illustrate in such poems as "The Raven" and "The Bells" and to explain in essays like "The Philosophy of Composition," "The Poetic Principle," and "The Rationale of Verse."

As a writer of prose fiction he left a body of sketches, short stories, and longer tales constructed on his strict principle that prose fiction must develop a single, predetermined effect. As in his poems, character and incident are subordinated to tone or mood, usually terror or horror, invested in a setting



vaguely described as "the misty mid region of Weir." Except in his hoaxes, bucoliques, and extravaganzas, which belong to a different order of writing, his stories all develop this singleness of impression. Whether his theme is death or revenge, the depiction of an unbalanced state of mind, or the ratiocinative unraveling of a mysterious plot, his purpose is to amuse and impress, to interest and harass, the mind of the reader. The third of the more notably early American short-story writers, Poe completed the threefold progression by which the short story developed. Living, as the originator of the genre, more or less unconscious of any technique, was primarily concerned with telling a story of sufficient complication in its narrative to entertain the reader. Hawthorne added intellectual content to give it body or carrying power. Poe, notably in his review of the 1842 edition of Hawthorne's *Twice-Told Tales*, enunciated a technique which he believed the short story should follow. If, as has been said, Poe's narrow prescriptions of tone and methodology put the American short story into a strait jacket from which it was a half-century freeing itself, it is to be said, also, that his technique did much toward regularizing the form

and giving it a distinctive status among the accepted literary genres.

In literary criticism, the department in which Poe was most voluminous, most of his writing is represented by reviews, *i. e.*, the practical work of an editor and journalist. In the hurly-burly of the editorial room there was seldom time to dwell on fundamental literary considerations, yet occasionally he succeeded, even in such review articles as those on Hawthorne's *Twice-Told Tales* or Longfellow's *Balads and Other Poems*, to discuss the basic principles of literature; while essays like "The Philosophy of Composition," "The Poetic Principle," and "The Rationale of Verse" contain an arresting statement of his rather narrow but highly influential critical philosophy. There are many who argue that as a poet his technical proficiency does not compensate for his lack of depth and dearth of ideas, there are others who feel that, as a short-story writer, he has been superseded by other more generous and gifted practitioners in that form, but there are few who deny his importance as the composer of the first body of valuable aesthetic criticism on this side of the Atlantic.

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### MS. Found in a Bottle<sup>1</sup>

*Qui n'a plus qu'un moment à vivre  
N'a plus rien à dissimuler*

QUINAULT—*Atys*.<sup>2</sup>

Of my country and of my family I have little to say. Ill usage and length of years have driven me from the one, and estranged me from the other. Hereditary wealth afforded me an education of no common order, and a contemplative turn of mind enabled me to methodize the stores which early study very diligently garnered up—Beyond all things, the study of the German moralists gave me great delight, not from any ill-advised admiration of their eloquent madness, but from the ease with which my habits of rigid thought enabled me to detect their falsities. I have often been reproached with the aridity of my genius; a deficiency of imagination has been imputed to me as a crime, and the Pyrrhonism<sup>3</sup> of my opinions has at all times rendered me notorious. Indeed, a strong relish for physical philosophy has, I fear, tinctured my mind with a very common error of this age—I mean the habit of referring occurrences, even the least susceptible of such reference, to the principles of that science. Upon the whole, no person could be less liable than myself to be led away from the severe precincts of truth by the *ignes fatui*<sup>4</sup> of superstition. I have thought proper to premise thus much, lest the incredible tale I have to tell should be considered rather the raving of a crude imagination, than the positive experience of a mind to which the reveries of fancy have been a dead letter and a nullity.

After many years spent in foreign travel, I sailed in the year 18—, from the port of Batavia, in the rich

and populous island of Java, on a voyage to the Archipelago of the Sunda islands. I went as passenger—having no other inducement than a kind of nervous restlessness which haunted me as a fiend.

Our vessel was a beautiful ship of about four hundred tons, copper-fastened, and built at Bombay of Malabar teak. She was freighted with cotton-wool and oil, from the Laccadive islands.<sup>5</sup> We had also on board coir,<sup>6</sup> jaggerec,<sup>7</sup> ghee,<sup>8</sup> cocoa-nuts, and a few cases of opium. The stowage was clumsily done, and the vessel consequently crank.

We got under way with a mere breath of wind, and for many days stood along the eastern coast of Java, without any other incident to beguile the monotony of our course than the occasional meeting with some of the small grabs of the Archipelago to which we were bound.

One evening, leaning over the taffrail, I observed a very singular, isolated cloud, to the N. W. It was remarkable, as well for its color, as from its being the first we had seen since our departure from Batavia. I watched it attentively until sunset, when it spread all at once to the eastward and westward, girding in the horizon with a narrow strip of vapor, and looking like a long line of low beach. My notice was soon afterwards attracted by the dusky-red appearance of the moon, and the peculiar character of the sea. The latter was undergoing a rapid change and the water seemed more than usually transparent. Although I could distinctly see the bottom, yet, heaving the lead, I found the ship in fifteen fathoms. The air now became intolerably hot, and was loaded

<sup>1</sup> This is the story with which Poe won the prize of \$100 for the best prose tale in a contest conducted by the *Baltimore Saturday Visitor*, where it appeared on October 19, 1833. A tale of horror and sensationalism, the climax of which coincides with the most exciting episode, it does not represent Poe at his best, but his ability to build up an air of mystery and to create suspense is to be noted.

<sup>2</sup> These two lines from the play, *Atys*, by Philippe Quinault (1635-1688) may be translated as follows: "He who has only a moment to live has nothing to hide."

<sup>3</sup> Pyrrhonism, a philosophic doctrine derived from Pyrrho, founder of a school of skeptics in ancient Greece, which considers all perceptual knowledge as unreliable.

<sup>4</sup> Misleading lights.

<sup>5</sup> The Laccadive, or Laccadive, islands are a group of coral islands about 200 miles west of the Malabar coast.

<sup>6</sup> Coconut husk fiber.

<sup>7</sup> Sugar made from the sap of palms.

<sup>8</sup> A semisolid oil made from butter.

with spiral exhalations similar to those arising from heated iron. As night came on, every breath of wind died away, and a more entire calm it is impossible to conceive. The flame of a candle burned upon the poop without the least perceptible motion, and a long hair, held between the finger and thumb, hung without the possibility of detecting a vibration. However, as the captain said he could perceive no indication of danger, and as we were drifting in bodily to shore, he ordered the sails to be furled, and the anchor let go. No watch was set, and the crew, consisting principally of Malays, stretched themselves deliberately upon deck. I went below—not without a full presentiment of evil. Indeed, every appearance warranted me in apprehending a Simoom.<sup>9</sup> I told the captain my fears, but he paid no attention to what I said, and left me without deigning to give a reply. My uneasiness, however, prevented me from sleeping, and about midnight I went upon deck.—As I placed my foot upon the upper step of the companion-ladder, I was startled by a loud, humming noise, like that occasioned by the rapid revolution of a mill-wheel, and before I could ascertain its meaning, I found the ship quivering to its centre. In the next instant, a wilderness of foam hurled us upon our beam-ends, and, rushing over us fore and aft, swept the entire decks from stem to stern.

The extreme fury of the blast proved, in a great measure, the salvation of the ship. Although completely water-logged, yet, as her masts had gone by the board, she rose, after a minute, heavily from the sea, and, staggering a while beneath the immense pressure of the tempest, finally righted.

By what miracle I escaped destruction, it is impossible to say. Stunned by the shock of the water, I found myself, upon recovery, jammed in between the stern-post and rudder. With great difficulty I gained my feet, and looking dizzily around, was, at first, struck with the idea of our being among breakers, so terrific, beyond the wildest imagination, was the whirlpool of mountainous and foaming ocean within which we were engulfed. After a while, I heard the voice of an old Swede, who had shipped with us at the moment of our leaving port. I hallooed to him with all my strength, and presently he came reeling aft. We soon discovered that we were the sole survivors of the accident. All on deck, with the exception of ourselves, had been swept overboard;—the

<sup>9</sup> A hot, dry, violent wind,

captain and mates must have perished as they slept, for the cabins were deluged with water. Without assistance, we could expect to do little for the security of the ship, and our excursions were at first paralyzed by the momentary expectation of going down. Our cable had, of course, parted like pack-thread, at the first breath of the hurricane, or we should have been instantaneously overwhelmed. We scudded with frightful velocity before the sea, and the water made clear breaches over us. The frame-work of our stern was shattered excessively, and, in almost every respect, we had received considerable injury, but to our extreme joy we found the pumps unchoked, and that we had made no great shifting of our ballast. The main fury of the blast had already blown over, and we apprehended little danger from the violence of the wind; but we looked forward to its total cessation with dismay, well believing, that, in our shattered condition, we should inevitably perish in the tremendous swell which would ensue. But this very just apprehension seemed by no means likely to be soon verified. For five entire days and nights—during which our only subsistence was a small quantity of jaggerie, procured with great difficulty from the fore-castle—the hulk flew at a rate defying computation, before rapidly succeeding flaws of wind, which, without equalling the first violence of the Simoom, were still more terrific than any tempest I had before encountered. Our course for the first four days was, with trifling variations, S. E. and by S., and we must have run down the coast of New Holland.<sup>10</sup>—On the fifth day the cold became extreme, although the wind had hauled round a point more to the northward.—The sun arose with a sickly yellow lustre, and clambered a very few degrees above the horizon—emitting no decisive light.—There were no clouds apparent, yet the wind was upon the increase, and blew with a fitful and unsteady fury. About noon, as nearly as we could guess, our attention was again arrested by the appearance of the sun. It gave out no light, properly so called, but a dull and sullen glow without reflection, as if all its rays were polarized. Just before sinking within the turgid sea, its central fires suddenly went out, as if hurriedly extinguished by some unaccountable power. It was a dim, silver-like rim, alone, as it rushed down the unfathomable ocean.

We waited in vain for the arrival of the sixth day—that day to me has not arrived—to the Swede, never

<sup>10</sup> Australia.

did arrive Thenceforward we were enshrouded in pitchy darkness, so that we could not have seen an object at twenty paces from the ship. Eternal night continued to envelop us, all unrelieved by the phosphoric sea-brilliance to which we had been accustomed in the tropics. We observed too, that, although the tempest continued to rage with unabated violence, there was no longer to be discovered the usual appearance of surf, or foam, which had hitherto attended us. All around were horror, and thick gloom, and a black sweltering descent of ebony—Superstitious terror crept by degrees into the spirit of the old Swede, and my own soul was wrapp'd up in silent wonder. We neglected all care of the ship, as worse than useless, and securing ourselves, as well as possible, to the stump of the mizen-mast, looked out bitterly into the world of ocean. We had no means of calculating time, nor could we form any guess of our situation. We were, however, well aware of having made farther to the southward than any previous navigators, and felt great amazement at not meeting with the usual impediments of ice. In the meantime every moment threatened to be our last—every mountainous billow hurried to overwhelm us. The swell surpassed anything I had imagined possible, and that we were not instantly buried is a miracle. My companion spoke of the lightness of our cargo, and reminded me of the excellent qualities of our ship; but I could not help feeling the utter hopelessness of hope itself, and prepared myself gloomily for that death which I thought nothing could defer beyond an hour, as, with every knot of way the ship made, the swelling of the black stupendous seas became more dismally appalling. At times we gasped for breath at an elevation beyond the albatross—at times became dizzy with the velocity of our descent into some watery hell, where the air grew stagnant, and no sound disturbed the slumbers of the kraken.

We were at the bottom of one of these abysses, when a quick scream from my companion broke fearfully upon the night. "See! see!" cried he, shrieking in my ears, "Almighty God! see! see!" As he spoke, I became aware of a dull, sullen glare of red light which streamed down the sides of the vast chasm where we lay, and threw a fitful brilliancy upon our deck. Casting my eyes upwards, I beheld a spectacle which froze the current of my blood. At a terrific height directly above us, and upon the very verge of the precipitous descent, hovered a gigantic ship

of, perhaps, four thousand tons. Although upreared upon the summit of a wave more than a hundred times her own altitude, her apparent size still exceeded that of any ship of the line or East Indiaman in existence. Her huge hull was of a deep dingy black, unrelieved by any of the customary carvings of a ship. A single row of brass cannon protruded from her open ports, and dashed from their polished surfaces the fires of innumerable battle-lanterns, which swung to and fro about her rigging. But what mainly inspired us with horror and astonishment, was that she bore up under a press of sail in the very teeth of that supernatural sea, and of that ungovernable hurricane. When we first discovered her, her bows were alone to be seen, as she rose slowly from the dim and horrible gulf beyond her. For a moment of intense terror she paused upon the giddy pinnacle, as if in contemplation of her own sublimity, then trembled and tottered, and—came down.

At this instant, I know not what sudden self-possession came over my spirit. Staggering as far aft as I could, I awaited fearlessly the ruin that was to overwhelm. Our own vessel was at length ceasing from her struggles, and sinking with her head to the sea. The shock of the descending mass struck her, consequently, in that portion of her frame which was already under water, and the inevitable result was to hurl me, with irresistible violence, upon the rigging of the stranger.

As I fell, the ship heaved in stays, and went about, and to the confusion ensuing I attributed my escape from the notice of the crew. With little difficulty I made my way unperceived to the main hatchway, which was partially open, and soon found an opportunity of secreting myself in the hold. Why I did so I can hardly tell. An indefinite sense of awe, which at first sight of the navigators of the ship had taken hold of my mind, was perhaps the principle of my concealment. I was unwilling to trust myself with a race of people who had offered, to the cursory glance I had taken, so many points of vague novelty, doubt, and apprehension. I therefore thought proper to contrive a hiding-place in the hold. This I did by removing a small portion of the shifting-boards, in such a manner as to afford me a convenient retreat between the huge timbers of the ship.

I had scarcely completed my work, when a footstep in the hold forced me to make use of it. A man passed by my place of concealment with a feeble and

unsteady gait I could not see his face, but had an opportunity of observing his general appearance. There was about it an evidence of great age and infirmity. His knees tottered beneath a load of years, and his entire frame quivered under the burthen. He muttered to himself, in a low broken tone, some words of a language which I could not understand, and groped in a corner among a pile of singular-looking instruments, and decayed charts of navigation. His manner was a wild mixture of the peevishness of second childhood, and the solemn dignity of a God. He at length went on deck, and I saw him no more.

\*       \*       \*       \*

A feeling, for which I have no name, has taken possession of my soul—a sensation which will admit of no analysis, to which the lessons of by-gone times are inadequate, and for which I fear futurity itself will offer me no key. To a mind constituted like my own, the latter consideration is an evil. I shall never—I know that I shall never—be satisfied with regard to the nature of my conceptions. Yet it is not wonderful that these conceptions are indefinite, since they have their origin in sources so utterly novel. A new sense—a new entity is added to my soul.

\*       \*       \*       \*

It is long since I first trod the deck of this terrible ship, and the rays of my destiny are, I think, gathering to a focus. Incomprehensible men! Wrapped up in meditations of a kind which I cannot divine, they pass me by unnoticed. Concealment is utterly folly on my part, for the people *will not* see. It was but just now that I passed directly before the eyes of the mate—it was no long while ago that I ventured into the captain's own private cabin, and took thence the materials with which I write, and have written. I shall from time to time continue this journal. It is true that I may not find an opportunity of transmitting it to the world, but I will not fail to make the endeavour. At the last moment I will enclose the MS. in a bottle, and cast it within the sea.

\*       \*       \*       \*

An incident has occurred which has given me new room for meditation. Are such things the operation of ungoverned Chance? I had ventured upon deck and thrown myself down, without attracting any

notice, among a pile of ratlin-stuff and old sails, in the bottom of the yawl. While musing upon the singularity of my fate, I unwittingly daubed with a tar-brush the edges of a neatly folded studding-sail which lay near me on a barrel. The studding-sail is now bent upon the ship, and the thoughtless touches of the brush are spread out into the word DISCOVERY \* \* \*

I have made many observations lately upon the structure of the vessel. Although well armed, she is not, I think, a ship of war. Her rigging, build, and general equipment, all negative a supposition of this kind. What she *is not*, I can easily perceive—what she *is* I fear it is impossible to say. I know not how it is, but in scrutinizing her strange model and singular cast of spars, her huge size and overgrown suits of canvass, her severely simple bow and antiquated stern, there will occasionally flash across my mind a sensation of familiar things, and there is always mixed up with such indistinct shadows of recollection, an unaccountable memory of old foreign chronicles and ages long ago \* \* \*

I have been looking at the timbers of the ship. She is built of a material to which I am a stranger. There is a peculiar character about the wood which strikes me as rendering it unfit for the purpose to which it has been applied. I mean its extreme *porousness*, considered independently of the worm-eaten condition which is a consequence of navigation in these seas, and apart from the rottenness attendant upon age. It will appear perhaps an observation somewhat over-curious, but this wood would have every characteristic of Spanish oak, if Spanish oak were distended by any unnatural means.

In reading the above sentence a curious apothegm of an old weather-beaten Dutch navigator comes full upon my recollection. "It is as sure," he was wont to say, when any doubt was entertained of his veracity, "as sure as there is a sea where the ship itself will grow in bulk like the living body of the seaman." \* \* \*

About an hour ago, I made bold to thrust myself among a group of the crew. They paid me no manner of attention, and, although I stood in the very midst of them all, seemed utterly unconscious of my presence. Like the one I had at first seen in the hold, they all bore about them the marks of a hoary old age. Their knees trembled with infirmity; their shoulders were bent double with decrepitude; their shrivelled skins rattled in the wind; their voices were

low, tremulous and broken, their eyes glistened with the rheum of years; and their gray hairs streamed terribly in the tempest. Around them, on every part of the deck, lay scattered mathematical instruments of the most quaint and obsolete construction \* \* \*

I mentioned some time ago the bending of a studding-sail. From that period the ship, being thrown dead off the wind, has continued her terrific course due south, with every rag of canvas packed upon her, from her trucks to her lower studding-sail-booms, and rolling every moment her top-gallant yard-arms into the most appalling hell of water which it can enter into the mind of man to imagine. I have just left the deck, where I find it impossible to maintain a footing, although the crew seem to experience little inconvenience. It appears to me a miracle of miracles that our enormous bulk is not swallowed up at once and forever. We are surely doomed to hover continually upon the brink of Eternity, without taking a final plunge into the abyss. From billows a thousand times more stupendous than any I have ever seen, we glide away with the facility of the arrowy sea-gull, and the colossal waters rear their heads above us like demons of the deep, but like demons confined to simple threats and forbidden to destroy. I am led to attribute these frequent escapes to the only natural cause which can account for such effect.—I must suppose the ship to be within the influence of some strong current, or impetuous undertow \* \* \*

I have seen the captain face to face, and in his own cabin—but, as I expected, he paid me no attention. Although in his appearance there is, to a casual observer, nothing which might bespeak him more or less than man—still a feeling of irrepressible reverence and awe mingled with the sensation of wonder with which I regarded him. In stature he is nearly my own height, that is, about five feet eight inches. He is of a well-knit and compact frame of body, neither robust nor remarkably otherwise. But it is the singularity of the expression which reigns upon the face—it is the intense, the wonderful, the thrilling evidence of old age, so utter, so extreme, which excites within my spirit a sense—a sentiment ineffable. His forehead, although little wrinkled, seems to bear upon it the stamp of a myriad of years.—His gray hairs are records of the past, and his grayer eyes are Sybils of the future. The cabin floor was thickly strewn with strange, iron-clasped folios, and moulder-

ing instruments of science, and obsolete long-forgotten charts. His head was bowed down upon his hands, and he peered, with a fiery unquiet eye, over a paper which I took to be a commission, and which, at all events, bore the signature of a monarch. He muttered to himself, as did the first seaman whom I saw in the hold, some low peevish syllables of a foreign tongue, and although the speaker was close at my elbow, his voice seemed to reach my ears from the distance of a mile \* \* \*

The ship and all in it are imbued with the spirit of Eld. The crew glide to and fro like the ghosts of buried centuries, their eyes have an eager and uneasy meaning, and when their fingers fall athwart my path in the wild glare of the battle-lanterns, I feel as I have never felt before, although I have been all my life a dealer in antiquities, and have imbibed the shadows of fallen columns at Balbec, and Tadmor, and Persepolis, until my very soul has become a ruin. \* \* \*

When I look around me I feel ashamed of my former apprehensions. If I trembled at the blast which has hitherto attended us, shall I not stand aghast at a warring of wind and ocean, to convey any idea of which the words tornado and smoom are trivial and ineffective? All in the immediate vicinity of the ship is the blackness of eternal night, and a chaos of foamless water; but, about a league on either side of us, may be seen, indistinctly and at intervals, stupendous ramparts of ice, towering away into the desolate sky, and looking like the walls of the universe \* \* \*

As I imagined, the ship proves to be in a current; if that appellation can properly be given to a tide which, howling and shrieking by the white ice, thunders on to the southward with a velocity like the headlong dashing of a cataract. \* \* \*

To conceive the horror of my sensations is, I presume, utterly impossible; yet a curiosity to penetrate the mysteries of these awful regions, predominates even over my despair, and will reconcile me to the most hideous aspect of death. It is evident that we are hurrying onwards to some exciting knowledge—some never-to-be-imparted secret, whose attainment is destruction. Perhaps this current leads us to the southern pole itself. It must be confessed that a supposition apparently so wild has every probability in its favor. \* \* \*

The crew pace the deck with unquiet and tremu-

lous step, but there is upon their countenances an expression more of the eagerness of hope than of the apathy of despair.

In the meantime the wind is still in our poop, and, as we carry a crowd of canvas, the ship is at times lifted bodily from out the sea—Oh, horror upon horror! the ice opens suddenly to the right, and to the left, and we are whirling dizzily, in immense concentric circles, round and round the borders of a gigantic amphitheatre, the summit of whose walls is lost in the darkness and the distance. But little time will be left me to ponder upon my destiny—the circles

rapidly grow small—we are plunging madly within the grasp of the whirlpool—and amid a roaring, and bellowing, and thundering of ocean and of tempest, the ship is quivering, oh God! and—going down

NOTE. The "MS Found in a Bottle," was originally published in 1831 [1833], and it was not until many years afterwards that I became acquainted with the maps of Mercator [Gerhard Kremer (1512-94), a Flemish geographer and cartographer], in which the ocean is represented as rushing, by four mouths, into the (northern) Polar Gulf, to be absorbed into the bowels of the earth, the Pole itself being represented by a black rock, towering to a prodigious height

### Berenice<sup>11</sup>

*Dicebant mihi sodales, si sepulchrum amicæ visitarem, curas meas aliquantulum fore levatas.* EBN ZAIAT.<sup>12</sup>

Misery is manifold. The wretchedness of earth is multi-form. Overreaching the wide horizon as the rainbow, its hues are as various as the hues of that arch,—as distinct too, yet as intimately blended. Overreaching the wide horizon as the rainbow! How is it that from beauty I have derived a type of unloveliness?—from the covenant of peace a simile of sorrow? But as, in ethics, evil is a consequence of good, so, in fact, out of joy is sorrow born. Either the memory of past bliss is the anguish of to-day, or the agonies which *are* have their origin in the ecstasies which *might have been*.

My baptismal name is Egæus; that of my family I will not mention. Yet there are no towers in the land more time-honored than my gloomy, gray, hereditary halls. Our line has been called a race of visionaries; and in many striking particulars—in the character of the family mansion—in the frescos of the chief saloon—in the tapestries of the dormitories—in the chiselling of some buttresses in the armory—but more especially in the gallery of antique paintings—in the fashion of the library chamber—and, lastly, in the very peculiar nature of the library's contents, there is more than sufficient evidence to warrant the belief.

The recollections of my earliest years are con-

nected with that chamber, and with its volumes—of which latter I will say no more. Here died my mother. Herein was I born. But it is mere idleness to say that I had not lived before—that the soul has no previous existence. You deny it?—let us not argue the matter. Convinced myself, I seek not to convince. There is, however, a remembrance of aerial forms—of spiritual and meaning eyes—of sounds, musical yet sad—a remembrance which will not be excluded, a memory like a shadow, vague, variable, indefinite, unsteady, and like a shadow, too, in the impossibility of my getting rid of it while the sunlight of my reason shall exist.

In that chamber was I born. Thus awaking from the long night of what seemed, but was not, nonentity, at once into the very regions of fairy-land—into a palace of imagination—into the wild dominions of monastic thought and erudition—it is not singular that I gazed around me with a startled and ardent eye—that I loitered away my boyhood in books, and dissipated my youth in reverie, but it is singular that as years rolled away, and the noon of manhood found me still in the mansion of my fathers—it is wonderful what stagnation there fell upon the springs of my life—wonderful how total an inversion took place in the character of my commonest thought. The realities of the world affected me as visions, and as visions only, while the wild ideas of the land of dreams became, in turn,—not the material of my every-day existence—but in very deed that existence utterly and solely in itself.

<sup>11</sup> First published in the *Southern Literary Messenger*, March, 1835.

<sup>12</sup> "My companion, said to me that my troubles would in some measure be relieved if I would visit the tomb of my sweet-heart." This motto provides the key to the idea of this story based on monomania and premature burial.

Ebn Zaiat has not yet been identified.

Berenice and I were cousins, and we grew up together in my paternal halls. Yet differently we grew—I ill of health, and buried in gloom—she agile, graceful, and overflowing with energy; heis the ramble on the hill-side—mine the studies of the cloister—I living within my own heart, and addicted body and soul to the most intense and painful meditation—she roaming carelessly through life with no thought of the shadows in her path, or the silent flight of the raven-winged hours. Berenice!—I call upon her name—Berenice!—and from the gray ruins of memory a thousand tumultuous recollections are startled at the sound! Ah! vividly is her image before me now, as in the early days of her light-heartedness and joy! Oh! gorgeous yet fantastic beauty! Oh! sylph amid the shrubberies of Arnheim!—Oh! Naiad among its fountains!—and then—then all is mystery and terror, and a tale which should not be told. Disease—a fatal disease—fell like the simoom upon her frame, and, even while I gazed upon her, the spirit of change swept over her, pervading her mind, her habits, and her character, and, in a manner the most subtle and terrible, disturbing even the identity of her person! Alas! the destroyer came and went, and the victim—where was she? I knew her not—or knew her no longer as Berenice.

Among the numerous train of maladies superinduced by that fatal and primary one which effected a revolution of so horrible a kind in the moral and physical being of my cousin, may be mentioned as the most distressing and obstinate in its nature, a species of epilepsy not unfrequently terminating in *trance* itself—trance very nearly resembling positive dissolution, and from which her manner of recovery was, in most instances, startlingly abrupt. In the mean time my own disease—for I have been told that I should call it by no other appellation—my own disease, then, grew rapidly upon me, and assumed finally a monomaniac character of a novel and extraordinary form—hourly and momentarily gaining vigor—and at length obtaining over me the most incomprehensible ascendancy. This monomania, if I must so term it, consisted in a morbid irritability of those properties of the mind in metaphysical science termed the *attentive*. It is more than probable that I am not understood; but I fear, indeed, that it is in no manner possible to convey to the mind of the merely general reader, an adequate idea of that nervous *intensity of interest* with which, in my case,

the powers of meditation (not to speak technically) busied and buried themselves, in the contemplation of even the most ordinary objects of the universe.

To muse for long unwearied hours with my attention riveted to some frivolous device on the margin, or in the typography of a book, to become absorbed for the better part of a summer's day, in a quaint shadow falling aslant upon the tapestry, or upon the door, to lose myself for an entire night in watching the steady flame of a lamp, or the embers of a fire; to dream away whole days over the perfume of a flower; to repeat monotonously some common word, until the sound, by dint of frequent repetition, ceased to convey any idea whatever to the mind, to lose all sense of motion or physical existence, by means of absolute bodily quiescence long and obstinately persevered in,—such were a few of the most common and least pernicious vagaries induced by a condition of the mental faculties, not, indeed, altogether unparalleled, but certainly bidding defiance to anything like analysis or explanation.

Yet let me not be misapprehended—The undue, earnest, and morbid attention thus excited by objects in their own nature frivolous, must not be confounded in character with that ruminating propensity common to all mankind, and more especially indulged in by persons of ardent imagination. It was not even, as might be at first supposed, an extreme condition, or exaggeration of such propensity, but primarily and essentially distinct and different. In the one instance, the dreamer, or enthusiast, being interested by an object usually *not* frivolous, imperceptibly loses sight of this object in a wilderness of deductions and suggestions issuing therefrom, until, at the conclusion of a day *often replete with luxury*, he finds the *incitamentum* or first cause of his musings entirely vanished and forgotten. In my case the primary object was *invariably frivolous*, although assuming, through the medium of my distempered vision, a refracted and unreal importance. Few deductions, if any, were made; and those few pertinaciously returning in upon the original object as a centre. The meditations were *never* pleasurable, and, at the termination of the reverie, the first cause, so far from being out of sight, had attained that supernaturally exaggerated interest which was the prevailing feature of the disease. In a word, the powers of mind more particularly exercised were, with me, as I have said



before, the *attentive*, and are, with the day-dreamer, the *speculative*.

My books, at this epoch, if they did not actually serve to irritate the disorder, partook, it will be perceived, largely, in their imaginative and inconsequential nature, of the characteristic qualities of the disorder itself. I well remember, among others, the treatise of the noble Italian Cœlius Secundus Curio<sup>13</sup> "*de Amplitudine Beati Regni Dei*," St. Austin's great work, the "*City of God*,"<sup>14</sup> and Tertullian "*de*<sup>15</sup> *Carne Christi*,"<sup>15</sup> in which the paradoxical sentence "*Mortuus est Dei filius; credibile est quia ineptum est: et sepultus resurrexit, certum est quia impossibile est*" occupied my undivided time, for many weeks of laborious and fruitless investigation.

Thus it will appear that, shaken from its balance only by trivial things, my reason bore resemblance to that ocean-crag spoken of by Ptolemy Hephestion,<sup>16</sup> which steadily resisting the attacks of human violence, and the fiercer fury of the waters and the winds, trembled only to the touch of the flower called Asphodel. And although, to a careless thinker, it might appear a matter beyond doubt, that the alteration produced by her unhappy malady, in the *moral* condition of Berenice, would afford me many objects for the exercise of that intense and abnormal meditation whose nature I have been at some trouble in explaining, yet such was not in any degree the case. In the lucid intervals of my infirmity, her calamity, indeed, gave me pain, and, taking deeply to heart that total wreck of her fair and gentle life, I did not fail to ponder frequently and bitterly upon the wonder-working means by which so strange a revolution had been so suddenly brought to pass. But these reflections partook not of the idiosyncrasy of my disease, and were such as would have occurred, under similar circumstances, to the ordinary mass of mankind. True to its own character, my disorder revelled in the less important but more startling changes wrought in the *physical* frame of Berenice—in the singular and most appalling distortion of her personal identity.

<sup>13</sup> An Italian Protestant, humanist, and controversialist who lived from 1503 to 1569.

<sup>14</sup> St. Augustine's great vindication of Christianity, *De civitate Dei* (A.D. 413-426).

<sup>15</sup> Tertullian (A.D. c. 160-230), one of the most learned of the Church fathers. The quotation may be translated. "The Son of God is dead; a thing which is credible because it is absurd; and is resurrected from the grave; a thing which is true because it is impossible."

<sup>16</sup> A Greek grammarian of Alexandria.

During the brightest days of her unapara-leled beauty, most surely I had never loved her. In the strange anomaly of my existence, feelings with me, *had never been* of the heart, and my passions *always were* of the mind. Through the gray of the early morning—among the trellised shadows of the forest at noonday—and in the silence of my library at night, she had flitted by my eyes, and I had seen her—not as the living and breathing Berenice, but as the Berenice of a dream—not as a being of the earth, earthy, but as the abstraction of such a being—not as a thing to admire, but to analyze—not as an object of love, but as the theme of the most abstruse although desultory speculation. And *now*—now I shuddered in her presence, and grew pale at her approach; yet bitterly lamenting her fallen and desolate condition, I called to mind that she had loved me long, and, in an evil moment, I spoke to her of marriage.

And at length the period of our nuptials was approaching, when, upon an afternoon in the winter of the year,—one of those unseasonably warm, calm, and misty days which are the nurse of the beautiful Halcyon,\*—I sat, (and sat, as I thought, alone,) in the inner apartment of the library. But uplifting my eyes I saw that Berenice stood before me.

Was it my own excited imagination—or the misty influence of the atmosphere—or the uncertain twilight of the chamber—or the gray draperies which fell around her figure—that caused in it so vacillating and indistinct an outline? I could not tell. She spoke no word, and I—not for worlds could I have uttered a syllable. An icy chill ran through my frame; a sense of insufferable anxiety oppressed me, a consuming curiosity pervaded my soul; and sinking back upon the chair, I remained for some time breathless and motionless, with my eyes riveted upon her person. Alas! its emaciation was excessive, and not one vestige of the former being, lurked in any single line of the contour. My burning glances at length fell upon the face.

The forehead was high, and very pale, and singularly placid; and the once jetty hair fell partially over it, and overshadowed the hollow temples with innumerable ringlets now of a vivid yellow, and jarring

\* "For as Jove, during the winter season, gives twice seven days of warmth, men have called this element and temperate time the nurse of the beautiful Halcyon."—*Simonides*. [The reference seems to be to Simonides of Ceos (556-469 B.C.), a noted Greek who wrote on numerous subjects.]

discordantly, in their fantastic character, with the reigning melancholy of the countenance. The eyes were lifeless, and lustreless, and seemingly pupil-less, and I shrank involuntarily from their glassy stare to the contemplation of the thin and shrunken lips. They parted, and in a smile of peculiar meaning, *the teeth* of the changed Berenice disclosed themselves slowly to my view. Would to God that I had never beheld them, or that, having done so, I had died!

\* \* \* \* \*

The shutting of a door disturbed me, and, looking up, I found that my cousin had departed from the chamber. But from the disordered chamber of my brain, had not, alas! departed, and would not be driven away, the white and ghastly *spectrum*<sup>17</sup> of the teeth. Not a speck on their surface—not a shade on their enamel—not an indenture in their edges—but what that period of her smile had sufficed to brand in upon my memory. I saw them *now* even more unequivocally than I beheld them *then*. The teeth!—the teeth!—they were here, and there, and every where, and visibly and palpably before me; long, narrow, and excessively white, with the pale lips writhing about them, as in the very moment of their first terrible development. Then came the full fury of my *monomania*, and I struggled in vain against its strange and irresistible influence. In the multiplied objects of the external world I had no thoughts but for the teeth. For these I longed with a phrenzied<sup>30</sup> desire. All other matters and all different interests became absorbed in their single contemplation. They—they alone were present to the mental eye, and they, in their sole individuality, became the essence of my mental life. I held them in every light. I turned them in every attitude. I surveyed their characteristics. I dwelt upon their peculiarities. I pondered upon their conformation. I mused upon the alteration in their nature. I shuddered as I assigned to them in imagination a sensitive and sentient<sup>40</sup> power, and even when unassisted by the lips, a capability of moral expression. Of Mad'selle Sallé it has been well said, "*que tous ses pas étaient des sentiments*,"<sup>18</sup> and of Berenice I more seriously believed *que toutes ses dents étaient des idées*. *Des idées!*—ah here was the idiotic thought that destroyed me!

<sup>17</sup> Image.

<sup>18</sup> Mad'selle Sallé was a French danseuse, and a protégée of Voltaire. The French means "that all her steps were sentiments."

*Des idées!*—ah *therefore* it was that I coveted them so madly! I felt that their possession could alone ever restore me to peace, in giving me back to reason.

And the evening closed in upon me thus—and then the darkness came, and tarried, and went—and the day again dawned—and the mists of a second night were now gathering around—and still I sat motionless in that solitary room, and still I sat buried in meditation, and still the *phantasma* of the teeth maintained its terrible ascendancy as, with the most vivid and hideous distinctness, it floated about amid the changing lights and shadows of the chamber. At length there broke in upon my dreams a cry as of horror and dismay, and thereunto, after a pause, succeeded the sound of troubled voices, intermingled with many low moanings of sorrow, or of pain. I arose from my seat and, throwing open one of the doors of the library, saw standing out in the ante-chamber a servant maiden, all in tears, who told me that Berenice was—no more. She had been seized with epilepsy in the early morning, and now, at the closing in of the night, the grave was ready for its tenant, and all the preparations for the burial were completed.

\* \* \* \* \*

I found myself sitting in the library, and again sitting there alone. It seemed that I had newly awakened from a confused and exciting dream. I knew that it was now midnight, and I was well aware that since the setting of the sun Berenice had been interred. But of that dicary period which intervened I had no positive—at least no definite comprehension. Yet its memory was replete with horror—horror more horrible from being vague, and terror more terrible from ambiguity. It was a fearful page in the record of my existence, written all over with dim, and hideous, and unintelligible recollections. I strived to decypher them, but in vain; while ever and anon, like the spirit of a departed sound, the shrill and piercing shriek of a female voice seemed to be ringing in my ears. I had done a deed—what was it? I asked myself the question aloud, and the whispering echoes of the chamber answered me, "*what was it?*"

On the table beside me burned a lamp, and near it lay a little box. It was of no remarkable character, and I had seen it frequently before, for it was the property of the family physician; but how came it

there, upon my table, and why did I shudder in regarding it? These things were in no manner to be accounted for, and my eyes at length dropped to the open pages of a book, and to a sentence underscored therein. The words were the singular but simple ones of the poet Ebn Zaiat, "*Dicebant mihi sodales si sepulchrum amicæ visitarem, curas meas aliquantum fore levatas*"<sup>19</sup> Why then, as I perused them, did the hairs of my head erect themselves on end, and the blood of my body become congealed within my veins?

There came a light tap at the library door, and pale as the tenant of a tomb, a menial entered upon tiptoe. His looks were wild with terror, and he spoke to me in a voice tremulous, husky, and very low. What said he?—some broken sentences I heard. He told of a wild cry disturbing the silence of the night—of the gathering together of the household—of a

<sup>19</sup> Note that the motto is here repeated

search in the direction of the sound,—and then his tones grew thrillingly distinct as he whispered me of a violated grave—of a disfigured body enshrouded, yet still breathing, still palpitating, still *alive*!

He pointed to my garments,—they were muddy and clotted with gore. I spoke not, and he took me gently by the hand,—it was indented with the impress of human nails. He directed my attention to some object against the wall,—I looked at it for some minutes,—it was a spade. With a shriek I bounded to the table, and grasped the box that lay upon it. But I could not force it open, and in my terror it slipped from my hands, and fell heavily, and burst into pieces; and from it, with a rattling sound, there rolled out some instruments of dental surgery, intermingled with thirty-two small, white and ivory-looking substances that were scattered to and fro about the floor.

1835

1840

### Ligeia<sup>20</sup>

*And the will therein lieth, which dieth not. Who knoweth the mysteries of the will, with its vigor? For God is but a great will pervading all things by nature of its intentness. Man doth not yield himself to the angels, nor unto death utterly, save only through the weakness of his feeble will.*  
JOSEPH GLANVILL.<sup>21</sup>

I cannot for my soul, remember how, when, or even precisely where, I first became acquainted with the lady Ligeia. Long years have since elapsed, and my memory is feeble through much suffering. Or, perhaps, I cannot now bring these points to mind, because, in truth, the character of my beloved, her rare learning, her singular yet placid caste of beauty, her low musical language, made their way into my heart by paces so steadily and stealthily progressive, that they have been unnoticed and unknown. Yet I be-

lieve that I met her first and most frequently in some large, old, decaying city near the Rhine. Of her family—I have surely heard her speak. That it is of a remotely ancient date cannot be doubted. Ligeia! Ligeia! Buried in studies of a nature more than all else adapted to deaden impressions of the outward world, it is by that sweet word alone—by Ligeia—that I bring before mine eyes in fancy the image of her who is no more. And now, while I write, a recollection flashes upon me that I have *never known* the paternal name of her who was my friend and my betrothed, and who became the partner of my studies, and finally the wife of my bosom. Was it a playful charge on the part of my Ligeia? or was it a test of my strength of affection, that I should institute no inquiries upon this point? or was it rather a caprice

<sup>20</sup> First published in the *American Museum* for September, 1838, this is really a reworking of the theme already presented in "Morella" (*Southern Literary Messenger*, April, 1835).

In a letter to Philip Pendleton Cooke, Poe said, "Touching 'Ligeia' you are right—all right—throughout. The gradual perception of the fact that Ligeia lives again in the person of Rowena is a far loftier and more thrilling idea than the one I have embodied. It offers, in my opinion, the widest possible scope to the imagination—it might be rendered even sublime. And this idea was mine—had I never written before I should have adopted it—but there is 'Morella.' Do you remember there the gradual conviction on the part of the parent that the spirit of the first Morella tenants the person of the second? It was necessary, since 'Morella' was written, to modify 'Ligeia.' I was

forced to be content with a sudden half-consciousness, on the part of the narrator, that Ligeia stood before him. One point I have not fully carried out—I should have intimated that the *will* did not perfect its intention—there should have been a relapse—a final one—and Ligeia (who had only succeeded in so much as to convey an idea of the truth to the narrator) should be at length entombed as Rowena—the bodily alterations having gradually faded away."

Despite these expressed dissatisfactions with the story, Poe regarded it as his best—an opinion with which critics often agree.

<sup>21</sup> Joseph Glanvill was a learned seventeenth-century divine associated with the Cambridge Platonists. The quotation has not been identified as Glanvill's.

of my own—a wildly romantic offering on the shrine of the most passionate devotion? I but indistinctly recall the fact itself—what wonder that I have utterly forgotten the circumstances which originated or attended it? And, indeed, if ever that spirit which is entitled *Romance*—if ever she, the wan and the misty-winged *Ashtophet*<sup>22</sup> of idolatrous Egypt, presided, as they tell, over marriages ill-omened, then most surely she presided over mine.

There is one dear topic, however, on which my memory fails me not. It is the *person* of Ligeia. In stature she was tall, somewhat slender, and, in her latter days, even emaciated. I would in vain attempt to portray the majesty, the quiet ease, of her demeanor, or the incomprehensible lightness and elasticity of her footfall. She came and departed as a shadow. I was never made aware of her entrance into my closed study, save by the dear music of her low sweet voice, as she placed her marble hand upon my shoulder. In beauty of face no maiden ever equalled her. It was the radiance of an opium-dream—an airy and spirit-lifting vision more wildly divine than the phantasies which hovered about the slumbering souls of the daughters of Delos.<sup>23</sup> Yet her features were not of that regular mould which we have been falsely taught to worship in the classical labors of the heathen. "There is no exquisite beauty," says Bacon, Lord Verulam,<sup>24</sup> speaking truly of all the forms and *genera* of beauty, "without some *strangeness* in the proportion." Yet, although I saw that the features of Ligeia were not of a classic regularity—although I perceived that her loveliness was indeed "exquisite," and felt that there was much of "strangeness" pervading it, yet I have tried in vain to detect the irregularity and to trace home my own perception of "the strange." I examined the contour of the lofty and pale forehead—it was faultless—how cold indeed that word when applied to a majesty so divine!—the skin rivalling the purest ivory, the commanding extent and repose, the gentle prominence of the regions above the temples,<sup>25</sup> and then the raven-black, the glossy, the luxuriant, and naturally-curling tresses, setting forth the full force of the Homeric epithet,

"hyacinthine!" I looked at the delicate outlines of the nose—and nowhere but in the graceful medallions of the Hebrews<sup>26</sup> had I beheld a similar perfection. There were the same luxurious smoothness of surface, the same scarcely perceptible tendency to the aquiline, the same harmoniously curved nostrils speaking the free spirit. I regarded the sweet mouth. Here was indeed the triumph of all things heavenly—the magnificent turn of the short upper lip—the soft, voluptuous slumber of the under—the dimples which sported, and the color which spoke—the teeth glancing back, with a brilliancy almost startling, every ray of the holy light which fell upon them in her serene and placid, yet most exultingly radiant of all smiles. I scrutinized the formation of the chin—and here, too, I found the gentleness of breadth, the softness and the majesty, the fulness and the spirituality, of the Greek—the contour which the god Apollo revealed but in a dream, to Cleomenes,<sup>27</sup> the son of the Athenian. And then I peered into the large eyes of Ligeia.

For eyes we have no models in the remotely antique. It might have been, too, that in these eyes of my beloved lay the secret to which Lord Verulam alludes. They were, I must believe, far larger than the ordinary eyes of our own race. They were even fuller than the fullest of the gazelle eyes of the tribe of the valley of Nourjahad.<sup>28</sup> Yet it was only at intervals—in moments of intense excitement—that this peculiarity became more than slightly noticeable in Ligeia. And at such moments was her beauty—in my heated fancy thus it appeared perhaps—the beauty of beings either above or apart from the earth—the beauty of the fabulous Hourri<sup>29</sup> of the Turk. The hue of the orbs was the most brilliant of black, and, far over them, hung jetty lashes of great length. The brows, slightly irregular in outline, had the same tint. The "strangeness," however, which I found in the eyes, was of a nature distinct from the formation, or the color, or the brilliancy of the features, and must, after all, be referred to the *expression*. Ah, word of no meaning! behind whose vast latitude of mere sound we intrench our ignorance of so much of the spiritual. The expression of the eyes of Ligeia!

<sup>22</sup> Apparently a reference to the Canaanitish deity Ashtoreth.

<sup>23</sup> An island among the Cyclades in the Aegean Sea. No special significance attaches to the "daughters of Delos." The name was probably chosen for alliteration.

<sup>24</sup> Francis Bacon (1561–1626). The quotation is from Bacon's essay "Of Beauty." Poe has substituted the word "exquisite" for Bacon's "excellent."

<sup>25</sup> According to phrenological lore, signifying "love of life."

<sup>26</sup> Roman bas-reliefs of the Jews.

<sup>27</sup> An Athenian sculptor of the time of Emperor Augustus, to whom the Venus de Medici is often ascribed.

<sup>28</sup> A reference to *The History of Nourjahad* (1767), an oriental tale by "Sidney Bidulph," i.e., Mrs. Frances Sheridan (1724–66).

<sup>29</sup> Beautiful women who inhabit the Mohammedan heaven.

How for long hours have I pondered upon it! How have I, through the whole of a midsummer night, struggled to fathom it! What was it—that something more profound than the well of Democritus<sup>30</sup>—which lay far within the pupils of my beloved? What *was* it? I was possessed with a passion to discover. Those eyes! those large, those shining, those divine orbs! they became to me twin stars of Leda, and I to them devoutest of astrologers.

There is no point, among the many incomprehensible anomalies of the science of mind, more thrillingly exciting than the fact—never, I believe, noticed in the schools—that, in our endeavors to recall to memory something long forgotten, we often find ourselves *upon the very verge* of remembrance, without being able, in the end, to remember. And thus how frequently, in my intense scrutiny of Ligeia's eyes, have I felt approaching the full knowledge of their expression—felt it approaching—yet not quite be mine—and so at length entirely depart! And (strange, oh strangest mystery of all!) I found, in the commonest objects of the universe, a circle of analogies to that expression. I mean to say that, subsequently to the period when Ligeia's beauty passed into my spirit, there dwelling as in a shrine, I derived, from many existences in the material world, a sentiment such as I felt always around, within me, by her large and luminous orbs. Yet not the more could I define that sentiment, or analyze, or even steadily view it. I recognised it, let me repeat, sometimes in the survey of a rapidly-growing vine—in the contemplation of a moth, a butterfly, a chrysalis, a stream of running water. I have felt it in the ocean; in the falling of a meteor. I have felt it in the glances of unusually aged people. And there are one or two stars in heaven—(one especially, a star of the sixth magnitude, double and changeable, to be found near the large star in *Lyra*,) in a telescopic scrutiny of which I have been made aware of the feeling. I have been filled with it by certain sounds from stringed instruments, and not unfrequently by passages from books. Among innumerable other instances, I well remember something in a volume of Joseph Glanvill, which (perhaps merely from its quaintness—who shall say?) never failed to inspire me with the sentiment: "And the will therein lieth, which dieth not. Who knoweth the mysteries of the will, with its vigor? For God

is but a great will pervading all things by nature of its intentness. Man doth not yield him to the angels, nor unto death utterly, save only through the weakness of his feeble will."

Length of years, and subsequent reflection, have enabled me to trace, indeed, some remote connection between this passage in the English moralist and a portion of the character of Ligeia. An *intensity* in thought, action, or speech, was possibly, in her, a result, or at at least an index, of that gigantic volition which, during our long intercourse, failed to give other and more immediate evidence of its existence. Of all the women whom I have ever known, she, the outwardly calm, the ever-placid Ligeia, was the most violently a prey to the tumultuous vultures of stern passion. And of such passion I could form no estimate, save by the miraculous expansion of those eyes which at once so delighted and appalled me—by the almost magical melody, modulation, distinctness, and placidity of her very low voice—and by the fierce energy (rendered doubly effective by contrast with her manner of utterance), of the wild words which she habitually uttered.

I have spoken of the learning of Ligeia: it was immense—such as I have never known in woman. In the classical tongues was she deeply proficient, and as far as my own acquaintance extended in regard to the modern dialects of Europe. I have never known her at fault. Indeed upon any theme of the most admired, because simply the most abstruse of the boasted erudition of the academy, have I ever found Ligeia at fault? How singularly—how thrillingly, this one point in the nature of my wife has forced itself, at this late period only, upon my attention! I said her knowledge was such as I have never known in woman—but where breathes the man who has traversed, and successfully, *all* the wide areas of moral, physical, and mathematical science? I saw not then what I now clearly perceive, that the acquisitions of Ligeia were gigantic, were astounding; yet I was sufficiently aware of her infinite supremacy to resign myself, with a child-like confidence, to her guidance through the chaotic world of metaphysical investigation at which I was most busily occupied during earlier years of our marriage. With how vast a triumph—with how vivid a delight—with how much of all that is ethereal in hope—did I *feel*, as she bent over me in studies but little sought—but less known—that delicious vista by slow degrees expanding before

<sup>30</sup> A Greek philosopher of the fourth century B.C. who is reputed to have retired to a well to study the heavens.

me, down whose long, gorgeous, and all untrodden path, I might at length pass onward to the goal of a wisdom too divinely precious not to be forbidden!

How poignant, then, must have been the grief with which, after some years, I beheld my well-grounded expectations take wings to themselves and fly away! Without Ligeia I was but as a child groping benighted. Her presence, her readings alone, rendered vividly luminous the many mysteries of the transcendentalism<sup>31</sup> in which we were immersed. Wanting the radiant lustre of her eyes, letters, lambent and golden, grew duller than Saturnian lead. And now those eyes shone less and less frequently upon the pages over which I pored. Ligeia grew ill. The wild eyes blazed with a too—too glorious effulgence; the pale fingers became of the transparent waxen hue of the grave; and the blue veins upon the lofty forehead swelled and sank impetuously with the tides of the most gentle emotion. I saw that she must die—and I<sup>20</sup> struggled desperately in spirit with the grim Azrael.<sup>32</sup> And the struggles of the passionate wife were, to my astonishment, even more energetic than my own. There had been much in her stern nature to impress me with the belief that, to her, death would have come without its terrors; but not so. Words are impotent to convey any just idea of the fierceness of resistance with which she wrestled with the Shadow. I groaned in anguish at the pitiable spectacle. I would have soothed—I would have reasoned; but, in the<sup>30</sup> intensity of her wild desire for life—for life—but for life—solace and reason were alike the uttermost of folly. Yet not until the last instance, amid the most convulsive writhings of her fierce spirit, was shaken the external placidity of her demeanor. Her voice grew more gentle—grew more low—yet I would not wish to dwell upon the wild meaning of the quietly uttered words. My brain reeled as I hearkened, entranced, to a melody more than mortal—to assumptions and aspirations which mortality had never be-<sup>40</sup>fore known.

That she loved me I should not have doubted; and I might have been easily aware that, in a bosom such as hers, love would have reigned no ordinary passion. But in death only, was I fully impressed with

<sup>31</sup> Not a reference to New England transcendentalism, but rather to the generally vague, strange, and idealistic in philosophy.

<sup>32</sup> The angel who separates the soul from the body at the moment of death.

the strength of her affection. For long hours, detaining my hand, would she pour out before me the overflowing of a heart whose more than passionate devotion amounted to idolatry. How had I deserved to be so blessed by such confessions?—how had I deserved to be so cursed with the removal of my beloved in the hour of her making them? But upon this subject I cannot bear to dilate. Let me say only, that in Ligeia's more than womanly abandonment to a love, alas! all unmerited, all unworthily bestowed, I at length recognised the principle of her longing, with so wildly earnest a desire, for the life which was now fleeing so rapidly away. It is this wild longing—it is this eager vehemence of desire for life—but for life—that I have no power to portray—no utterance capable of expressing.

At high noon of the night in which she departed, beckoning me, peremptorily, to her side, she bade me repeat certain verses composed by herself not many days before. I obeyed her. They were these:—

Lo! 'tis a gala night  
Within the lonesome latter years!  
An angel throng, bewinged, bedight  
In veils, and drowned in tears,  
Sit in a theatre, to see  
A play of hopes and fears,  
While the orchestra breathes fitfully  
The music of the spheres.

Mimes, in the form of God on high,  
Mutter and mumble low,  
And hither and thither fly;  
Mere puppets they, who come and go  
At bidding of vast formless things  
That shift the scenery to and fro,  
Flapping from out their condor wings  
Invisible Wo!

That motley drama!—oh, be sure  
It shall not be forgot!  
With its Phantom chased for evermore,  
By a crowd that seize it not,  
Through a circle that ever returneth in  
To the self-same spot;  
And much of Madness, and more of Sin  
And horror, the soul of the plot!

But see, amid the mimic rout  
A crawling shape intrude!  
A blood-red thing that writhes from out  
The scenic solitude!  
It writhes!—it writhes!—with mortal pangs  
The mimes become its food,  
And the seraphs sob at vermin fangs  
In human gore imbued.

Out—out are the lights—out all!  
 And over each quivering form,  
 The curtain, a funeral pall,  
 Comes down with the rush of a storm—  
 And the angels, all pallid and wan,  
 Uprising, unveiling, affirm  
 That the play is the tragedy, "Man,"  
 And its hero, the conqueror Worm.<sup>33</sup>

"O God!" half shrieked Ligeia, leaping to her feet and extending her arms aloft with a spasmodic movement, as I made an end of these lines—"O God! O Divine Father!—shall these things be undeviatingly so?—shall this conqueror be not once conquered? Are we not part and parcel in Thee? Who—who knoweth the mysteries of the will with its vigor? Man doth not yield him to the angels, *nor unto death utterly*, save only through the weakness of his feeble will."

And now, as if exhausted with emotion, she suffered her white arms to fall, and returned solemnly to her bed of death. And as she breathed her last sighs, there came mingled with them a low murmur from her lips. I bent to them my ear, and distinguished, again, the concluding words of the passage in Glanvill:—"Man doth not yield him to the angels, *nor unto death utterly*, save only through the weakness of his feeble will."

She died: and I, crushed into the very dust with sorrow, could no longer endure the lonely desolation of my dwelling in the dim and decaying city by the Rhine. I had no lack of what the world calls wealth. Ligeia had brought me far more, very far more, than ordinarily falls to the lot of mortals. After a few months, therefore, of weary and aimless wandering, I purchased, and put in some repair, an abbey, which I shall not name, in one of the wildest and least frequented portions of fair England. The gloomy and dreary grandeur of the building, the almost savage aspect of the domain, the many melancholy and time-honored memories connected with both, had much in unison with the feelings of utter abandonment which had driven me into that remote and unsocial region of the country. Yet although the external abbey, with its verdant decay hanging about it, suffered but little alteration, I gave way, with a childlike perversity, and perchance with a faint hope

<sup>33</sup> The five-act-like structure of this poem, which carries the drama-motif throughout, has been attacked for its "staginess" and as verging on the melodramatic; but it has also been judged as "Poe's most original poem."

of alleviating my sorrows, to a display of more than regal magnificence within. For such follies, even in childhood, I had imbibed a taste, and now they came back to me as if in the dotage of grief. Alas, I feel how much even of incipient madness might have been discovered in the gorgeous and fantastic draperies, in the solemn carvings of Egypt, in the wild cornices and furniture, in the Bedlam<sup>34</sup> patterns of the carpets of tufted gold! I had become a bounden slave in the trammels of opium, and my labors and my orders had taken a coloring from my dreams. But these absurdities I must not pause to detail. Let me speak only of that one chamber, ever accursed, whither in a moment of mental alienation, I led from the altar as my bride—as the successor of the unforgotten Ligeia—the fair-haired and blue-eyed Lady Rowena Trevanion, of Tremaine.

There is no individual portion of the architecture and decoration of that bridal chamber which is not now visibly before me. Where were the souls of the haughty family of the bride, when, through thirst of gold, they permitted to pass the threshold of an apartment so bedecked, a maiden and a daughter so beloved? I have said, that I minutely remember the details of the chamber—yet I am sadly forgetful on topics of deep moment; and here there was no system, no keeping, in the fantastic display, to take hold upon the memory. The room lay in a high turret of the castellated abbey, was pentagonal in shape, and of capacious size. Occupying the whole southern face of the pentagon was the sole window—an immense sheet of unbroken glass from Venice—a single pane, and tinted of a leaden hue, so that the rays of either the sun or moon passing through it, fell with a ghastly lustre on the objects within. Over the upper portion of this huge window, extended the trellis-work of an aged vine, which clambered up the massy walls of the turret. The ceiling, of gloomy-looking oak, was excessively lofty, vaulted, and elaborately fretted with the wildest and most grotesque specimens of a semi-Gothic, semi-Druidical device. From out the most central recess of this melancholy vaulting, depended, by a single chain of gold with long links, a huge censer of the same metal, Saracenic in pattern, and with many perforations so contrived that there writhed in and out of them, as if

<sup>34</sup> Bedlam, here used in the sense of insane or crazy; derived from Bedlam, a corruption of Bethlehem, the hospital of St. Mary's of Bethlehem, an asylum in London.

endued with a serpent vitality, a continual succession of parti-colored fires.

Some few ottomans and golden candelabra, of Eastern figure, were in various stations about; and there was the couch, too—the bridal couch—of an Indian model, and low, and sculptured of solid ebony, with a pall-like canopy above. In each of the angles of the chamber stood on end a gigantic sarcophagus of black granite, from the tombs of the kings over against Luxor,<sup>35</sup> with their aged lids full of immemorial sculpture. But in the draping of the apartment lay, alas! the chief phantasy of all. The lofty walls, gigantic in height—even unproportionately so—were hung from summit to foot, in vast folds, with a heavy and massive-looking tapestry—tapestry of a material which was found alike as a carpet on the floor, as a covering for the ottomans and the ebony bed, as a canopy for the bed, and as the gorgeous volutes of the curtains which partially shaded the window. The material was the richest cloth of gold. It was spotted all over, at irregular intervals, with arabesque figures, about a foot in diameter, and wrought upon the cloth in patterns of the most jetty black. But these figures partook of the true character of the arabesque only when regarded from a single point of view. By a contrivance now common, and indeed traceable to a very remote period of antiquity, they were made changeable in aspect. To one entering the room, they bore the appearance of simple monstrosities; but upon a farther advance, this appearance gradually departed; and, step by step, as the visitor moved his station in the chamber, he saw himself surrounded by an endless succession of the ghastly forms which belong to the superstition of the Norman, or arise in the guilty slumbers of the monk. The phantasmagoric effect was vastly heightened by the artificial introduction of a strong continual current of wind behind the draperies—giving a hideous and uneasy animation to the whole.

In halls such as these—in a bridal chamber such as this—I passed, with the Lady of Tremaine, the unhallowed hours of the first month of our marriage—passed them with but little disquietude. That my wife dreaded the fierce moodiness of my temper—that she shunned me, and loved me but little—I

could not help perceiving; but it gave me rather pleasure than otherwise. I loathed her with a hatred belonging more to demon than to man. My memory flew back, (oh, with what intensity of regret!) to Ligeia, the beloved, the august, the beautiful, the entombed. I revelled in recollections of her purity, of her wisdom, of her lofty, her ethereal nature, of her passionate, her idolatrous love. Now, then, did my spirit fully and freely burn with more than all the fires of her own. In the excitement of my opium dreams, (for I was habitually fettered in the shackles of the drug,) I would call aloud upon her name, during the silence of the night, or among the sheltered recesses of the glens by day, as if, through the wild eagerness, the solemn passion, the consuming ardor of my longing for the departed, I could restore her to the pathway she had abandoned—ah, *could* it be for ever?—upon the earth.

About the commencement of the second month of the marriage, the Lady Rowena was attacked with sudden illness, from which her recovery was slow. The fever which consumed her, rendered her nights uneasy; and in her perturbed state of half-slumber, she spoke of sounds, and of motions, in and about the chamber of the turret, which I concluded had no origin save in the distemper of her fancy, or perhaps in the phantasmagoric influences of the chamber itself. She became at length convalescent—finally, well. Yet but a brief period elapsed, ere a second more violent disorder again threw her upon a bed of suffering; and from this attack her frame, at all times feeble, never altogether recovered. Her illnesses were, after this epoch, of alarming character, and of more alarming recurrence, defying alike the knowledge and the great exertions of her physicians. With the increase of the chronic disease, which had thus, apparently, taken too sure hold upon her constitution to be eradicated by human means, I could not fail to observe a similar increase in the nervous irritation of her temperament, and in her excitability by trivial causes of fear. She spoke again, and now more frequently and pertinaciously, of the sounds—of the slight sounds—and of the unusual motions among the tapestries, to which she had formerly alluded.

One night, near the closing in of September, she pressed this distressing subject with more than usual emphasis upon my attention. She had just awakened from an unquiet slumber, and I had been

<sup>35</sup> A village on the Nile in Upper Egypt on part of the site of ancient Thebes, noted for the grandeur of its temples, statues, tombs, and other antiquities.



watching, with feelings half of anxiety, half of vague terror, the workings of her emaciated countenance. I sat by the side of her ebony bed, upon one of the ottomans of India. She partly arose, and spoke, in an earnest low whisper, of sounds which she *then* heard, but which I could not hear—of motions which she *then* saw, but which I could not perceive. The wind was rushing hurriedly behind the tapestries, and I wished to show her (what, let me confess it, I could not *all* believe) that those almost inarticulate breath-<sup>10</sup> ings, and those very gentle variations of the figures upon the wall, were but the natural effects of that customary rushing of the wind. But a deadly pallor, overspreading her face, had proved to me that my exertions to reassure her would be fruitless. She appeared to be fainting, and no attendants were within call. I remembered where was deposited a decanter of light wine which had been ordered by her physicians, and hastened across the chamber to procure it. But, as I stepped beneath the light of the censer,<sup>20</sup> two circumstances of a startling nature attracted my attention. I had felt that some palpable although invisible object had passed lightly by my person; and I saw that there lay upon the golden carpet, in the very middle of the rich lustre thrown from the censer, a shadow—a faint, indefinite shadow of angelic aspect—such as might be fancied for the shadow of a shade. But I was wild with the excitement of an immoderate dose of opium, and heeded these things but little, nor spoke of them to Rowena. Having<sup>30</sup> found the wine, I recrossed the chamber, and poured out a goblet-ful, which I held to the lips of the fainting lady. She had now partially recovered, however, and took the vessel herself, while I sank upon an ottoman near me, with my eyes fastened upon her person. It was then that I became distinctly aware of a gentle footfall upon the carpet, and near the couch; and in a second thereafter, as Rowena was in the act of raising the wine to her lips, I saw, or may have dreamed that I saw, fall within the goblet, as<sup>40</sup> if from some invisible spring in the atmosphere of the room, three or four large drops of a brilliant and ruby colored fluid. If this I saw—not so Rowena. She swallowed the wine unhesitatingly, and I forbore to speak to her of a circumstance which must, after all, I considered, have been but the suggestion of a vivid imagination, rendered morbidly active by the terror of the lady, by the opium, and by the hour.

Yet I cannot conceal it from my own perception

that, immediately subsequent to the fall of the ruby-drops, a rapid change for the worse took place in the disorder of my wife; so that, on the third subsequent night, the hands of her menials prepared her for the tomb, and on the fourth, I sat alone, with her shrouded body, in that fantastic chamber which had received her as my bride.—Wild visions, opium-engendered, flitted, shadow-like before me. I gazed with unquiet eye upon the sarcophagi in the angles of the room, upon the varying figures of the drapery, and upon the writhing of the parti-colored fires in the censer overhead. My eyes then fell, as I called to mind the circumstances of a former night, to the spot beneath the glare of the censer where I had seen the faint traces of the shadow. It was there, however, no longer; and breathing with greater freedom, I turned my glances to the pallid and rigid figure upon the bed. Then rushed upon me a thousand memories of Ligeia—and then came back upon my heart, with the turbulent violence of a flood, the whole of that unutterable woe with which I had regarded *her* thus enshrouded. The night waned; and still, with a bosom full of bitter thoughts of the one only and supremely beloved, I remained gazing upon the body of Rowena.

It might have been midnight, or perhaps earlier, or later, for I had taken no note of time, when a sob, low, gentle, but very distinct, startled me from my reverie. I *felt* that it came from the bed of ebony—the bed of death. I listened in an agony of superstitious terror—but there was no repetition of the sound. I strained my vision to detect any motion in the corpse—but there was not the slightest perceptible. Yet I could not have been deceived. I *had* heard the noise, however faint, and my soul was awakened within me. I resolutely and perseveringly kept my attention riveted upon the body. Many minutes elapsed before any circumstance occurred tending to throw light upon the mystery. At length it became evident that a slight, a very feeble, and barely noticeable tinge of color had flushed up within the cheeks, and along the sunken small veins of the eyelids. Through a species of unutterable horror and awe, for which the language of mortality has no sufficiently energetic expression, I felt my heart cease to beat, my limbs grow rigid where I sat. Yet a sense of duty finally operated to restore my self-possession. I could no longer doubt that we had been precipitate in our preparations—that Rowena still lived. It was

necessary that some immediate exertion be made; yet the turret was altogether apart from the portion of the abbey tenanted by the servants—there were none within call—I had no means of summoning them to my aid without leaving the room for many minutes—and this I could not venture to do. I therefore struggled alone in my endeavors to call back the spirit still hovering. In a short period it was certain, however, that a relapse had taken place; the color disappeared from both eyelid and cheek, leaving a wan-  
 10 ness even more than that of marble; the lips became doubly shrivelled and pinched up in the ghastly expression of death; a repulsive clamminess and coldness overspread rapidly the surface of the body; and all the usual rigorous stiffness immediately supervened. I fell back with a shudder upon the couch from which I had been so startlingly aroused, and again gave up myself to passionate waking visions of Ligeia.

An hour thus elapsed, when (could it be possible?)  
 20 I was a second time aware of some vague sound issuing from the region of the bed. I listened—in extremity of horror. The sound came again—it was a sigh. Rushing to the corpse, I saw—distinctly saw—a tremor upon the lips. In a minute afterward they relaxed, disclosing a bright line of the pearly teeth. Amazement now struggled in my bosom with the profound awe which had hitherto reigned there alone. I felt that my vision grew dim, that my reason wandered; and it was only by a violent effort that I at  
 30 length succeeded in nerving myself to the task which duty thus once more had pointed out. There was now a partial glow upon the forehead and upon the cheek and throat; a perceptible warmth pervaded the whole frame; there was even a slight pulsation at the heart. The lady *lived*; and with redoubled ardor I betook myself to the task of restoration. I chafed and bathed the temples and the hands, and used every exertion which experience, and no little medical reading, could suggest. But in vain. Suddenly, the color fled  
 40 the pulsation ceased, the lips resumed the expression of the dead, and, in an instant afterward, the whole body took upon itself the icy chilliness, the livid hue, the intense rigidity, the sunken outline, and all the loathsome peculiarities of that which has been, for many days, a tenant of the tomb.

And again I sunk into visions of Ligeia—and again, (what marvel that I shudder while I write?) *again* there reached my ears a low sob from the region of

the ebony bed. But why shall I minutely detail the unspeakable horrors of that night? Why shall I pause to relate how, time after time, until near the period of the gray dawn, this hideous drama of revivification was repeated; how each terrific relapse was only into a sterner and apparently more irredeemable death; how each agony wore the aspect of a struggle with some invisible foe; and how each struggle was succeeded by I know not what of wild change in the personal appearance of the corpse? Let me hurry to a conclusion.

The greater part of the fearful night had worn away, and she who had been dead, once again stirred—and now more vigorously than hitherto, although arousing from a dissolution more appalling in its utter hopelessness than any. I had long ceased to struggle or to move, and remained sitting rigidly upon the ottoman, a helpless prey to a whirl of violent emotions, of which extreme awe was perhaps the least  
 terrible, the least consuming. The corpse, I repeat, stirred, and now more vigorously than before. The hues of life flushed up with unwonted energy into the countenance—the limbs relaxed—and, save that the eyelids were yet pressed heavily together, and that the bandages and draperies of the grave still imparted their charnel character to the figure, I might have dreamed that Rowena had indeed shaken off, utterly, the fetters of Death. But if this idea was not, even then, altogether adopted, I could at least doubt  
 no longer, when, arising from the bed, tottering, with feeble steps, with closed eyes, and with the manner of one bewildered in a dream, the thing that was enshrouded advanced boldly and palpably into the middle of the apartment.

I trembled not—I stirred not—for a crowd of unutterable fancies connected with the air, the stature, the demeanor of the figure, rushing hurriedly through my brain, had paralyzed—had chilled me into stone. I stirred not—but gazed upon the apparition. There was a mad disorder in my thoughts—a tumult unappeasable. Could it, indeed, be the *living* Rowena who confronted me? Could it, indeed, be Rowena *at all*—the fair-haired, the blue-eyed Lady Rowena Trevanion of Tremaine? Why, *why*, should I doubt it? The bandage lay heavily about the mouth—but then might it not be the mouth of the breathing Lady of Tremaine? And the cheeks—there were the roses as in her noon of life—yes, these might indeed be the fair cheeks of the living Lady of Tremaine. And the

chin, with its dimples, as in health, might it not be hers?—but *had she then grown taller since her malady?* What inexpressible madness seized me with that thought? One bound, and I had reached her feet! Shrinking from my touch, she let fall from her head, unloosened, the ghastly crements which had confined it, and there streamed forth, into the rushing atmosphere of the chamber, huge masses of long

and dishevelled hair; *it was blacker than the raven wings of midnight!* And now slowly opened the eyes of the figure which stood before me. "Here then, at least," I shrieked aloud, "can I never—can I never be mistaken—these are the full, and the black, and the wild eyes—of my lost love—of the Lady—of the LADY LIGEIA."

1838

1840

### *The Fall of the House of Usher*<sup>36</sup>

*Son cœur est un luth suspendu;  
Sitôt qu'on le touche il résonne.*  
DE BÉRANGER.<sup>37</sup>

During the whole of a dull, dark, and soundless day in the autumn of the year, when the clouds hung oppressively low in the heavens, I had been passing alone, on horseback, through a singularly dreary tract of country; and at length found myself, as the shades of the evening drew on, within view of the melancholy House of Usher. I know not how it was—but, with the first glimpse of the building, a sense of insufferable gloom pervaded my spirit. I say insufferable; for the feeling was unrelieved by any of that half-pleasurable, because poetic, sentiment, with which the mind usually receives even the sternest natural images of the desolate or terrible. I looked upon the scene before me—upon the mere house, and the simple landscape features of the domain—upon the bleak walls—upon the vacant eye-like windows—upon a few rank sedges—and upon a few white trunks of decayed trees—with an utter depression of soul which I can compare to no earthly sensation more properly than to the after-dream of the reveller upon opium—the bitter lapse into everyday life—the hideous dropping off of the veil. There was an iciness, a sinking, a sickening of the heart—an unredeemed dreariness of thought which no goading of the imagination could torture into aught of the sublime. What was it—I paused to think—what was it that so unnerved me in the contemplation of the House of Usher? It was a mystery all insoluble; nor could I grapple with the shadowy fancies that

crowded upon me as I pondered. I was forced to fall back upon the unsatisfactory conclusion, that while, beyond doubt, there *are* combinations of very simple natural objects which have the power of thus affecting us, still the analysis of this power lies among considerations beyond our depth. It was possible, I reflected, that a mere different arrangement of the particulars of the scene, of the details of the picture, would be sufficient to modify, or perhaps to annihilate its capacity for sorrowful impression; and, acting upon this idea, I reined my horse to the precipitous brink of a black and lurid tarn that lay in unruffled lustre by the dwelling, and gazed down—but with a shudder even more thrilling than before—upon the remodelled and inverted images of the gray sedge, and the ghastly tree-stems, and the vacant and eye-like windows.

Nevertheless, in this mansion of gloom I now proposed to myself a sojourn of some weeks. Its proprietor, Roderick Usher, had been one of my boon companions in boyhood; but many years had elapsed since our last meeting. A letter, however, had lately reached me in a distant part of the country—a letter from him—which, in its wildly importunate nature, had admitted of no other than a personal reply. The MS. gave evidence of nervous agitation. The writer spoke of acute bodily illness—of a mental disorder which oppressed him—and of an earnest desire to see me, as his best, and indeed his only personal friend, with a view of attempting, by the cheerfulness of my society, some alleviation of his malady. It was the manner in which all this, and much more, was said—it was the apparent *heart* that went with his request—which allowed me no room for hesitation; and I accordingly obeyed forthwith what I still considered a very singular summons.

Although, as boys, we had been even intimate

<sup>36</sup> First printed in *Burton's Gentleman's Magazine*, September, 1839.

<sup>37</sup> From De Béranger's "Le Refus," ll. 41–42: "His heart is a lute hung up; as soon as it is touched, it resounds." Cf. Poe's "Israfel," ll. 1–2, 16–22. Pierre Jean de Béranger (1780–1857) was a popular French lyric poet of great versatility, especially of subject-matter.

associates, yet I really knew little of my friend. His reserve had been always excessive and habitual. I was aware, however, that his very ancient family had been noted, time out of mind, for a peculiar sensibility of temperament, displaying itself, through long ages, in many works of exalted art, and manifested, of late, in repeated deeds of munificent yet unobtrusive charity, as well as in a passionate devotion to the intricacies, perhaps even more than to the orthodox and easily recognizable beauties, of musical science. I had learned, too, the very remarkable fact, that the stem of the Usher race, all time-honoured as it was, had put forth, at no period, any enduring branch; in other words, that the entire family lay in the direct line of descent, and had always, with very trifling and very temporary variation, so lain. It was this deficiency, I considered, while running over in thought the perfect keeping of the character of the premises with the accredited character of the people, and while speculating upon the possible influence which the one, in the long lapse of centuries, might have exercised upon the other—it was this deficiency, perhaps, of collateral issue, and the consequent undeviating transmission, from sire to son, of the patrimony with the name, which had, at length, so identified the two as to merge the original title of the estate in the quaint and equivocal appellation of the “House of Usher”—an appellation which seemed to include, in the minds of the peasantry who used it, both the family and the family mansion.

I have said that the sole effect of my somewhat childish experiment—that of looking down within the tarn—had been to deepen the first singular impression. There can be no doubt that the consciousness of the rapid increase of my superstition—for why should I not so term it?—served mainly to accelerate the increase itself. Such, I have long known, is the paradoxical law of all sentiments having terror as a basis. And it might have been for this reason only, that, when I again uplifted my eyes to the house itself, from its image in the pool, there grew in my mind a strange fancy—a fancy so ridiculous, indeed, that I but mention it to show the vivid force of the sensations which oppressed me. I had so worked upon my imagination as really to believe that about the whole mansion and domain there hung an atmosphere peculiar to themselves and their immediate vicinity—an atmosphere which had no affinity with the air of heaven, but which had reeked up

from the decayed trees, and the gray wall, and the silent tarn—a pestilential and mystic vapour, dull, sluggish, faintly discernible, and leaden-hued.

Shaking off from my spirit what *must* have been a dream, I scanned more narrowly the real aspect of the building. Its principal feature seemed to be that of an excessive antiquity. The discoloration of ages had been great. Minute fungi overspread the whole exterior, hanging in a fine tangled web-work from the eaves. Yet all this was apart from any extraordinary dilapidation. No portion of the masonry had fallen; and there appeared to be a wild inconsistency between its still perfect adaptation of parts, and the crumbling condition of the individual stones. In this there was much that reminded me of the specious totality of old wood-work which has rotted for long years in some neglected vault, with no disturbance from the breath of the external air. Beyond this indication of extensive decay, however, the fabric gave little token of instability. Perhaps the eye of a scrutinizing observer might have discovered a barely perceptible fissure, which, extending from the roof of the building in front, made its way down the wall in a zigzag direction, until it became lost in the sullen waters of the tarn.

Noticing these things, I rode over a short causeway to the house. A servant in waiting took my horse, and I entered the Gothic archway of the hall. A valet, of stealthy step, thence conducted me, in silence, through many dark and intricate passages in my progress to the *studio* of his master. Much that I encountered on the way contributed, I know not how, to heighten the vague sentiments of which I have already spoken. While the objects around me—while the carvings of the ceilings, the sombre tapestries of the walls, the ebony blackness of the floors, and the phantasmagoric armorial trophies which rattled as I strode, were but matters to which, or to such as which, I had been accustomed from my infancy—while I hesitated not to acknowledge how familiar was all this—I still wondered to find how unfamiliar were the fancies which ordinary images were stirring up. On one of the staircases, I met the physician of the family. His countenance, I thought, wore a mingled expression of low cunning and perplexity. He accosted me with trepidation and passed on. The valet now threw open a door and ushered me into the presence of his master.

The room in which I found myself was very large

and lofty. The windows were long, narrow, and pointed, and at so vast a distance from the black oaken floor as to be altogether inaccessible from within. Feeble gleams of encrimsoned light made their way through the trellised panes, and served to render sufficiently distinct the more prominent objects around; the eye, however, struggled in vain to reach the remoter angles of the chamber, or the recesses of the vaulted and fretted ceiling. Dark draperies hung upon the walls. The general furniture was profuse, comfortless, antique, and tattered. Many books and musical instruments lay scattered about, but failed to give any vitality to the scene. I felt that I breathed an atmosphere of sorrow. An air of stern, deep, and irredeemable gloom hung over and pervaded all.

Upon my entrance, Usher arose from a sofa on which he had been lying at full length, and greeted me with a vivacious warmth which had much in it, I at first thought, of an overdone cordiality—of the constrained effort of the *ennuyé*<sup>38</sup> man of the world. A glance, however, at his countenance, convinced me of his perfect sincerity. We sat down; and for some moments, while he spoke not, I gazed upon him with a feeling half of pity, half of awe. Surely, man had never before so terribly altered, in so brief a period, as had Roderick Usher! It was with difficulty that I could bring myself to admit the identity of the wan being before me with the companion of my early boyhood. Yet the character of his face had been at all times remarkable. A cadaverousness of complexion; an eye large, liquid, and luminous beyond comparison; lips somewhat thin and very pallid, but of a surpassingly beautiful curve; a nose of a delicate Hebrew model, but with a breadth of nostril unusual in similar formations; a finely moulded chin, speaking, in its want of prominence, of a want of moral energy; hair of a more than web-like softness and tenuity; these features, with an inordinate expansion above the regions of the temple,<sup>39</sup> made up altogether a countenance not easily to be forgotten. And now in the mere exaggeration of the prevailing character of these features, and of the expression they were wont to convey, lay so much of change that I doubted to whom I spoke. The now ghastly pallor of the skin, and the now miraculous lustre of the eye,

above all things startled and even awed me. The silken hair, too, had been suffered to grow all unheeded, and as, in its wild gossamer texture, it floated rather than fell about the face, I could not, even with effort, connect its Arabesque expression with any idea of simple humanity.

In the manner of my friend I was at once struck with an incoherence—an inconsistency; and I soon found this to arise from a series of feeble and futile struggles to overcome an habitual trepidancy—an excessive nervous agitation. For something of this nature I had indeed been prepared, no less by his letter, than by reminiscences of certain boyish traits, and by conclusions deduced from his peculiar physical conformation and temperament. His action was alternately vivacious and sullen. His voice varied rapidly from a tremulous indecision (when the animal spirits seemed utterly in abeyance) to that species of energetic concision—that abrupt, weighty, unhurried, and hollow-sounding enunciation—that leaden, self-balanced and perfectly modulated guttural utterance, which may be observed in the lost drunkard, or the irreclaimable eater of opium, during the periods of his most intense excitement.

It was thus that he spoke of the object of my visit, of his earnest desire to see me, and of the solace he expected me to afford him. He entered, at some length, into what he conceived to be the nature of his malady. It was, he said, a constitutional and a family evil, and one for which he despaired to find a remedy—a mere nervous affection, he immediately added, which would undoubtedly soon pass off. It displayed itself in a host of unnatural sensations. Some of these, as he detailed them, interested and bewildered me; although, perhaps, the terms, and the general manner of the narration had their weight. He suffered much from a morbid acuteness of the senses; the most insipid food was alone endurable; he could wear only garments of certain texture; the odours of all flowers were oppressive; his eyes were tortured by even a faint light; and there were but peculiar sounds, and these from stringed instruments, which did not inspire him with horror.

To an anomalous species of terror I found him a bounden slave. "I shall perish," said he, "I *must* perish in this deplorable folly. Thus, thus, and not otherwise, shall I be lost. I dread the events of the future, not in themselves, but in their results. I shudder at the thought of any, even the most trivial, inci-

<sup>38</sup> Bored, wearied.

<sup>39</sup> This expansion above the temples was regarded by phrenologists as indicative of "ideality."

dent, which may operate upon this intolerable agitation of soul. I have, indeed, no abhorrence of danger, except in its absolute effect—in terror. In this unnerved—in this pitiable condition—I feel that the period will sooner or later arrive when I must abandon life and reason together, in some struggle with the grim phantasm, FEAR.”

I learned, moreover, at intervals, and through broken and equivocal hints, another singular feature of his mental condition. He was enchained by certain supersitious impressions in regard to the dwelling which he tenanted, and whence, for many years, he had never ventured forth—in regard to an influence whose supposititious force was conveyed in terms too shadowy here to be re-stated—an influence which some peculiarities in the mere form and substance of his family mansion, had, by dint of long suffering, he said, obtained over his spirit—an effect which the *physique* of the gray walls and turrets, and of the dim tarn into which they all looked down, had, at length, brought about upon the *morale* of his existence.

He admitted, however, although with hesitation, that much of the peculiar gloom which thus afflicted him could be traced to a more natural and far more palpable origin—to the severe and long-continued illness—indeed to the evidently approaching dissolution—of a tenderly beloved sister—his sole companion for long years—his last and only relative on earth. “Her decease,” he said, with a bitterness which I can never forget, “would leave him (him the hopeless and the frail) the last of the ancient race of the Ushers.” While he spoke, the lady Madeline (for so was she called) passed slowly through a remote portion of the apartment, and, without having noticed my presence, disappeared. I regarded her with an utter astonishment not unmingled with dread—and yet I found it impossible to account for such feelings. A sensation of stupor oppressed me, as my eyes followed her retreating steps. When a door, at length, closed upon her, my glance sought instinctively and eagerly the countenance of the brother—but he had buried his face in his hands, and I could only perceive that a far more than ordinary wanness had overspread the emaciated fingers through which trickled many passionate tears.

The disease of the lady Madeline had long baffled the skill of her physicians. A settled apathy, a gradual wasting away of the person, and frequent although

transient affections of a partially cataleptical character, were the unusual diagnosis. Hitherto she had steadily borne up against the pressure of her malady, and had not betaken herself finally to bed; but, on the closing in of the evening of my arrival at the house, she succumbed (as her brother told me at night with inexpressible agitation) to the prostrating power of the destroyer; and I learned that the glimpse I had obtained of her person would thus probably be the last I should obtain—that the lady, at least while living, would be seen by me no more.

For several days ensuing, her name was unmentioned by either Usher or myself: and during this period I was busied in earnest endeavours to alleviate the melancholy of my friend. We painted and read together; or I listened, as if in a dream, to the wild improvisations of his speaking guitar. And thus, as a closer and still closer intimacy admitted me more unreservedly into the recesses of his spirit, the more bitterly did I perceive the futility of all attempt at cheering a mind from which darkness, as if an inherent positive quality, poured forth upon all objects of the moral and physical universe, in one unceasing radiation of gloom.

I shall ever bear about me a memory of the many solemn hours I thus spent alone with the master of the House of Usher. Yet I should fail in any attempt to convey an idea of the exact character of the studies, or of the occupations, in which he involved me, or led me the way. An excited and highly distempered ideality threw a sulphurous lustre over all. His long improvised dirges will ring forever in my ears. Among other things, I hold painfully in mind a certain singular perversion and amplification of the wild air of the last waltz of Von Weber.<sup>40</sup> From the paintings over which his elaborate fancy brooded, and which grew, touch by touch, into vaguenesses at which I shuddered the more thrillingly, because I shuddered knowing not why;—from these paintings (vivid as their images now are before me) I would in vain endeavour to educe more than a small portion which should lie within the compass of merely written words. By the utter simplicity, by the nakedness of his designs, he arrested and overawed attention. If ever mortal painted an idea, that mortal was Roderick Usher. For me at least—in the circumstances then surrounding me—there arose out of the pure

<sup>40</sup> Baron Karl von Weber (1786–1826), a German composer of romantic German operas.

abstractions which the hypochondriac contrived to throw upon his canvas, an intensity of intolerable awe, no shadow of which felt I ever yet in the contemplation of the certainly glowing yet too concrete reveries of Fuseli.<sup>41</sup>

One of the phantasmagoric conceptions of my friend, partaking not so rigidly of the spirit of abstraction, may be shadowed forth, although feebly, in words. A small picture presented the interior of an immensely long and rectangular vault or tunnel, with low walls, smooth, white, and without interruption or device. Certain accessory points of the design served well to convey the idea that this excavation lay at an exceeding depth below the surface of the earth. No outlet was observed in any portion of its vast extent, and no torch, or other artificial source of light was discernible; yet a flood of intense rays rolled throughout, and bathed the whole in a ghastly and inappropriate splendour.

I have just spoken of that morbid condition of the auditory nerve which rendered all music intolerable to the sufferer, with the exception of certain effects of stringed instruments. It was, perhaps, the narrow limits to which he thus confined himself upon the guitar, which gave birth, in great measure, to the fantastic character of his performances. But the fervid facility of his *impromptus* could not be so accounted for. They must have been, and were, in the notes, as well as in the words of his wild fantasias (for he not unfrequently accompanied himself with rhymed verbal improvisations), the result of that intense mental collectedness and concentration to which I have previously alluded as observable only in particular moments of the highest artificial excitement. The words of one of these rhapsodies I have easily remembered. I was, perhaps, the more forcibly impressed with it, as he gave it, because, in the under or mystic current of its meaning, I fancied that I perceived, and for the first time, a full consciousness on the part of Usher, of the tottering of his lofty reason upon her throne. The verses, which were entitled "The Haunted Palace,"<sup>42</sup> ran very nearly, if not accurately, thus:

<sup>41</sup> Heinrich Fuessly (1741-1825), born in Switzerland, professor of painting at the Royal Academy, London.

<sup>42</sup> This poem, first published in the *Baltimore Museum* for April, 1839, entered in the Poe-Longfellow plagiarism controversy, the question being whether Longfellow's "Beleaguered City" derived from Poe's "Haunted Palace" or *vice versa*.

## I

In the greenest of our valleys  
By good angels tenanted,  
Once a fair and stately palace—  
Radiant palace—reared its head.  
In the monarch Thought's dominion—  
It stood there!  
Never seraph spread a pinion  
Over fabric half so fair.

## II

Banners yellow, glorious, golden,  
On its roof did float and flow;  
(This—all this—was in the olden  
Time long ago)  
And every gentle air that dallied,  
In that sweet day,  
Along the ramparts plumed and pallid,  
A winged odour went away.

## III

Wanderers in that happy valley  
Through two luminous windows saw  
Spirits moving musically  
To a lute's well-tuned law,  
Round about a throne, were sitting  
(Porphyrogene!)<sup>43</sup>  
In state his glory well befitting,  
The ruler of the realm was seen.

## IV

And all with pearl and ruby glowing  
Was the fair palace door,  
Through which came flowing, flowing, flowing  
And sparkling evermore,  
A troop of Echoes whose sweet duty  
Was but to sing,  
In voices of surpassing beauty,  
The wit and wisdom of their king.

## V

But evil things, in robes of sorrow,  
Assailed the monarch's high estate;  
(Ah, let us mourn, for never morrow  
Shall dawn upon him, desolate!)  
And, round about his home, the glory  
That blushed and bloomed  
Is but a dim-remembered story  
Of the old time entombed.

## VI

And travellers now within that valley,  
Through the red-litten windows, see  
Vast forms that move fantastically  
To a discordant melody;  
While, like a rapid ghastly river,  
Through the pale door,  
A hideous throng rush out forever,  
And laugh—but smile no more.

<sup>43</sup> A name meaning "born to the purple," or of royal birth.

I well remember that suggestions arising from this ballad, led us into a train of thought wherein there became manifest an opinion of Usher's which I mention not so much on account of its novelty, (for other men \* have thought thus,) as on account of the pertinacity with which he maintained it. This opinion, in its general form, was that of the sentience of all vegetable things. But, in his disordered fancy, the idea had assumed a more daring character, and trespassed, under certain conditions, upon the kingdom of inorganization. I lack words to express the full extent, or the earnest *abandon* of his persuasion. The belief, however, was connected (as I have previously hinted) with the gray stones of the home of his forefathers. The conditions of the sentience had been here, he imagined, fulfilled in the method of collocation of these stones—in the order of their arrangement, as well as in that of the many *fungi* which overspread them, and of the decayed trees which stood around—above all, in the long undisturbed endurance of this arrangement, and in its reduplication in the still waters of the tarn. Its evidence—the evidence of the sentience—was to be seen, he said, (and I here started as he spoke,) in the gradual yet certain condensation of an atmosphere of their own about the waters and the walls. The result was discoverable, he added, in that silent, yet importunate and terrible influence which for centuries had moulded the destinies of his family, and which made *him* what I now saw him—what he was.<sup>30</sup> Such opinions need no comment, and I will make none.

Our books—the books which, for years, had formed no small portion of the mental existence of the invalid—were, as might be supposed, in strict keeping with this character of phantasm. We pored together over such works as the *Vervet et Chartreuse* of

Gresset; the *Belphegor* of Machiavelli; the *Heaven and Hell* of Swedenborg; the *Subterranean Voyage* of Nicholas Klimm by Holberg; the *Chiromancy* of Robert Flud, of Jean D'Indaginé, and of De la Chambre; the *Journey into the Blue Distance* of Tieck; and the *City of the Sun* of Campanella. One favourite volume was a small octavo edition of the *Directorium Inquisitorum*, by the Dominican Eymeric de Gironne; and there were passages in Pomponius Mela, about the old African Satyrs and Ægipans, over which Usher would sit dreaming for hours. His chief delight, however, was found in the perusal of an exceedingly rare and curious book in quarto Gothic—the manual of a forgotten church—the *Vigilia Mortuorum secundum Chorum Ecclesiæ Maguntinæ*.<sup>44</sup>

I could not help thinking of the wild ritual of this work, and of its probable influence upon the hypochondriac, when one evening, having informed me abruptly that the lady Madeline was no more, he stated his intention of preserving her corpse for a fortnight, (previously to its final interment,) in one of the numerous vaults within the main walls of the building. The worldly reason, however, assigned for this singular proceeding, was one which I did not feel at liberty to dispute. The brother had been led to his resolution (so he told me), by consideration of the unusual character of the malady of the deceased, of certain obtrusive and eager inquiries on the part of her medical men, and of the remote and exposed situation of the burial-ground of the family. I will not deny that when I called to mind the sinister countenance of the person whom I met upon the staircase on the day of my arrival at the house, I had no desire to oppose what I regarded as at best but a

\* "Watson, Dr. Percival, Spallanzani, and especially the Bishop of Llandaff.—See 'Chemical Essays,' vol. v." [Richard Watson (1737–1816). James Gates Percival (1795–1856), American scientist and poet. Lazaro Spallanzani (1729–99), Italian scientist, traveler, and author. The Bishop of Llandaff, professor of chemistry at Cambridge and writer on chemical subjects.]

<sup>44</sup> This array of little-known authors and titles is one example among many of Poe's show of erudition. *Vervet* and *Ma Chartreuse* are poems by Jean Baptiste Gresset (1709–77). *Belphegor* is a satirical story of which both Machiavelli and Brevio wrote Italian versions in the sixteenth century. Swedenborg (1688–1772) was a Swedish religious mystic. Ludwig

Holberg (1684–1754) was author of the imaginary Lucianic voyage of *Niels Klim's Subterranean Journey* (1741). Robert Flud (1574–1637) was an English physician and writer on Rosicrucian and pseudo-scientific subjects. His book on chiromancy (palmistry) was long widely used. Jean D'Indaginé was author of the popular *Chiromantia* (Strassburg, 1522). Marin Cureau de la Chambre (1594–1669) was author of *Discours sur les Principes de la Chiromancie* (Paris, 1653). Ludwig Tieck (1773–1853) was a German romantic poet, dramatist, and critic. Thomaso Campanella (1568–1639) was an Italian philosopher and author of a utopian book, *Civitas Solis* (1643). The *Inquisitorum Directorium*, by Nicolas Eymeric de Geronne, inquisitor-general of Castile in 1356, is a history of the methods employed in the Spanish Inquisition. Pomponius Mela was a Roman geographer of the first century A.D., whose *De Chorographia* was the standard geography during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. *Vigilia Mortuorum* has not been identified, but there were many such books of "vigils of the dead."



harmless, and by no means an unnatural, precaution.<sup>45</sup>

At the request of Usher, I personally aided him in the arrangements for the temporary entombment. The body having been encoffined, we two alone bore it to its rest. The vault in which we placed it (and which had been so long unopened that our torches, half smothered in its oppressive atmosphere, gave us little opportunity for investigation) was small, damp, and entirely without means of admission for light; 10 lying, at great depth, immediately beneath that portion of the building in which was my own sleeping apartment. It had been used, apparently, in remote feudal times, for the worst purposes of a donjon-keep, and, in later days, as a place of deposit for powder, or some other highly combustible substance, as a portion of its floor, and the whole interior of a long archway through which we reached it, were carefully sheathed with copper. The door, of massive iron, had been, also, similarly protected. Its immense 20 weight caused an unusually sharp grating sound, as it moved upon its hinges.

Having deposited our mournful burden upon tressels within this region of horror, we partially turned aside the yet unscrewed lid of the coffin, and looked upon the face of the tenant. A striking similitude between the brother and sister now first arrested my attention; and Usher, divining, perhaps, my thoughts, murmured out some few words from which I learned that the deceased and himself had been twins, and 30 that sympathies of a scarcely intelligible nature had always existed between them. Our glances, however, rested not long upon the dead—for we could not regard her unawed. The disease which had thus entombed the lady in the maturity of youth, had left, as usual in all maladies of a strictly cataleptical character, the mockery of a faint blush upon the bosom and the face, and that suspiciously lingering smile upon the lip which is so terrible in death. We replaced and screwed down the lid, and, having secured 40 the door of iron, made our way, with toil, into the scarcely less gloomy apartments of the upper portion of the house.

<sup>45</sup> Here the medical man, first encountered in the sixth paragraph, is reintroduced. His only purpose is to give point to Usher's precautionary measures. Usher's fear of "body snatching" (instances of which Poe followed in the newspapers and magazines) causes Madeline's temporary entombment within the House of Usher. Note that the earlier characterization of the doctor, whose expression mingled "perplexity and cunning," provides motivation for Usher's apprehension.

And now, some days of bitter grief having elapsed, an observable change came over the features of the mental disorder of my friend. His ordinary manner had vanished. His ordinary occupations were neglected or forgotten. He roamed from chamber to chamber with hurried, unequal, and objectless step. The pallor of his countenance had assumed, if possible, a more ghastly hue—but the luminousness of his eye had utterly gone out. The once occasional huskiness of his tone was heard no more; and a tremulous quaver, as if of extreme terror, habitually characterized his utterance. There were times, indeed, when I though his unceasingly agitated mind was labouring with some oppressive secret, to divulge which he struggled for the necessary courage. At times, again, I was obliged to resolve all into the mere inexplicable vagaries of madness, for I beheld him gazing upon vacancy for long hours, in an attitude of the profoundest attention, as if listening to some imaginary sound. It was no wonder that his condition terrified—that it infected me. I felt creeping upon me, by slow yet certain degrees, the wild influences of his own fantastic yet impressive superstitions.

It was, especially, upon retiring to bed late in the night of the seventh or eighth day after the placing of the lady Madeline within the donjon, that I experienced the full power of such feelings. Sleep came not near my couch—while the hours waned and waned away. I struggled to reason off the nervousness which had dominion over me. I endeavoured to believe that much, if not all, of what I felt, was due to the bewildering influence of the gloomy furniture of the room—of the dark and tattered draperies, which, tortured into motion by the breath of a rising tempest, swayed fitfully to and fro upon the walls, and rustled uneasily about the decorations of the bed. But my efforts were fruitless. An irrepressible tremour gradually pervaded my frame; and, at length, there sat upon my very heart an incubus of utterly 30 causeless alarm. Shaking this off with a gasp and a struggle, I uplifted myself upon the pillows, and, peering earnestly within the intense darkness of the chamber, hearkened—I know not why, except that an instinctive spirit prompted me—to certain low and indefinite sounds which came, through the pauses of the storm, at long intervals, I knew not whence. Overpowered by an intense sentiment of horror, unaccountable yet unendurable, I threw on my clothes with haste (for I felt that I should sleep no more

during the night), and endeavoured to arouse myself from the pitiable condition into which I had fallen, by pacing rapidly to and fro through the apartment.

I had taken but few turns in this manner, when a light step on an adjoining staircase arrested my attention. I presently recognized it as that of Usher. In an instant afterward he rapped, with a gentle touch, at my door, and entered, bearing a lamp. His countenance was, as usual, cadaverously wan—but, moreover, there was a species of mad hilarity in his eyes—an evidently restrained *hysteria* in his whole demeanour. His air appalled me—but anything was preferable to the solitude which I had so long endured, and I even welcomed his presence as a relief.

“And you have not seen it?” he said abruptly, after having stared about him for some moments in silence—“you have not then seen it?—but, stay! you shall.” Thus speaking, and having carefully shaded his lamp, he hurried to one of the casements, and threw it freely open to the storm.

The impetuous fury of the entering gust nearly lifted us from our feet. It was, indeed, a tempestuous yet sternly beautiful night, and one wildly singular in its terror and its beauty. A whirlwind had apparently collected its force in our vicinity; for there were frequent and violent alterations in the direction of the wind; and the exceeding density of the clouds (which hung so low as to press upon the turrets of the house) did not prevent our perceiving the life-like velocity with which they flew careering from all points against each other, without passing away into the distance. I say that even their exceeding density did not prevent our perceiving this—yet we had no glimpse of the moon or stars—nor was there any flashing forth of the lightning. But the under surfaces of the huge masses of agitated vapour, as well as all terrestrial objects immediately around us, were glowing in the unnatural light of a faintly luminous and distinctly visible gaseous exhalation which hung about and enshrouded the mansion.

“You must not—you shall not behold this!” said I, shudderingly, to Usher, as I led him, with a gentle violence, from the window to a seat. “These appearances, which bewilder you, are merely electrical phenomena not uncommon—or it may be that they have their ghastly origin in the rank miasma of the tarn. Let us close this casement;—the air is chilling and dangerous to your frame. Here is one of your favourite romances. I will read, and you shall listen;—

and so we will pass away this terrible night together.”

The antique volume which I had taken up was the “*Mad Trist*” of Sir Launcelot Canning;<sup>46</sup> but I had called it a favourite of Usher’s more in sad jest than in earnest; for, in truth, there is little in its uncouth and unimaginative prolixity which could have had interest for the lofty and spiritual ideality of my friend. It was, however, the only book immediately at hand; and I indulged a vague hope that the excitement which now agitated the hypochondriac, might find relief (for the history of mental disorder is full of similar anomalies) even in the extremeness of the folly which I should read. Could I have judged, indeed, by the wild overstrained air of vivacity with which he hearkened, or apparently hearkened, to the words of the tale, I might well have congratulated myself upon the success of my design.

I had arrived at that well-known portion of the story where Ethelred, the hero of the *Trist*, having sought in vain for peaceable admission into the dwelling of the hermit, proceeds to make good an entrance by force. Here, it will be remembered, the words of the narrative run thus:

“And Ethelred, who was by nature of a doughty heart, and who was now mighty withal, on account of the powerfulness of the wine which he had drunken, waited no longer to hold parley with the hermit, who, in sooth, was of an obstinate and malicious turn, but, feeling the rain upon his shoulders, and fearing the rising of the tempest, uplifted his mace outright, and, with blows, made quickly room in the plankings of the door for his gauntleted hand; and now pulling therewith sturdily, he so cracked, and ripped, and tore all asunder, that the noise of the dry and hollow-sounding wood alarmed and reverberated throughout the forest.”

At the termination of this sentence I started, and for a moment, paused; for it appeared to me (although I at once concluded that my excited fancy had deceived me)—it appeared to me that, from some very remote portion of the mansion, there came, indistinctly, to my ears, what might have been, in its exact similarity of character, the echo (but a stifled and dull one certainly) of the very cracking and ripping sound which Sir Launcelot had so particularly described. It was, beyond doubt, the coinci-

<sup>46</sup> Both title and author appear to be inventions of Poe, as are the supposed quotations or extracts which Poe supplied.

dence alone which had arrested my attention; for, amid the rattling of the sashes of the casements, and the ordinary commingled noises of the still increasing storm, the sound, in itself, had nothing, surely, which should have interested or disturbed me. I continued the story:

"But the good champion Ethelred, now entering within the door, was sore enraged and amazed to perceive no signal of the malicious hermit; but, in the stead thereof, a dragon of a scaly and prodigious demcanour, and of a fiery tongue, which sate in guard before a palace of gold, with a floor of silver; and upon the wall there hung a shield of shining brass with this legend enwritten—

Who entereth herein, a conqueror hath bin;  
Who slayeth the dragon, the shield he shall win;

And Ethelred uplifted his mace, and struck upon the head of the dragon, which fell before him, and gave up his pesty breath, with a shriek so horrid and harsh, and withal so piercing that Ethelred had fain to close his ears with his hands against the dreadful noise of it, the like whereof was never before heard."

Here again I paused abruptly, and now with a feeling of wild amazement—for there could be no doubt whatever that, in this instance, I did actually hear (although from what direction it proceeded I found it impossible to say) a low and apparently distant, but harsh, protracted, and most unusual screaming or grating sound—the exact counterpart of what my fancy had already conjured up for the dragon's unnatural shriek as described by the romancer.

Oppressed, as I certainly was, upon the occurrence of the second and most extraordinary coincidence, by a thousand conflicting sensations, in which wonder and extreme terror were predominant, I still retained sufficient presence of mind to avoid exciting, by any observation, the sensitive nervousness of my companion. I was by no means certain that he had noticed the sounds in question; although, assuredly, a strange alteration had, during the last few minutes, taken place in his demeanour. From a position fronting my own, he had gradually brought round his chair, so as to sit with his face to the door of the chamber; and thus I could but partially perceive his features, although I saw that his lips trembled as if he were murmuring inaudibly. His head had dropped upon his breast—yet I knew that he was not asleep,

from the wide and rigid opening of the eye as I caught a glance of it in profile. The motion of his body, too, was at variance with this idea—for he rocked from side to side with a gentle yet constant and uniform sway. Having rapidly taken notice of all this, I resumed the narrative of Sir Launcelot, which thus proceeded:

"And now, the champion, having escaped from the terrible fury of the dragon, bethinking himself of the brazen shield, and of the breaking up of the enchantment which was upon it, removed the carcass from out of the way before him, and approached valorously over the silver pavement of the castle to where the shield was upon the wall; which in sooth tarried not for his full coming, but fell down at his feet upon the silver floor, with a mighty great and terrible ringing sound."

No sooner had these syllables passed my lips, than—as if a shield of brass had indeed, at the moment, fallen heavily upon a floor of silver—I became aware of a distinct, hollow, metallic, and clangorous, yet apparently muffled reverberation. Completely unnerved, I leaped to my feet; but the measured rocking movement of Usher was undisturbed. I rushed to the chair in which he sat. His eyes were bent fixedly before him, and throughout his whole countenance there reigned a stony rigidity. But, as I placed my hand upon his shoulder, there came a strong shudder over his whole person; a sickly smile quivered about his lips; and I saw that he spoke in a low, hurried, and gibbering murmur, as if unconscious of my presence. Bending closely over him, I at length drank in the hideous import of his words.

"Not hear it?—yes, I hear it, and *have* heard it. Long—long—long—many minutes, many hours, many days, have I heard it—yet I dared not—oh, pity me, miserable wretch that I am!—I dared not—I *dared* not speak! *We have put her living in the tomb!* Said I not that my senses were acute? I *now* tell you that I heard her first feeble movements in the hollow coffin. I heard them—many, many days ago—yet I dared not—I *dared not speak!* And now—to-night—Ethelred—ha! ha!—the breaking of the hermit's door, and the death-cry of the dragon, and the clangour of the shield!—say, rather the rending of her coffin, and the grating of the iron hinges of her prison, and her struggles within the coppered archway of the vault! Oh whither shall I fly? Will she not be here anon? Is she not hurrying to upbraid me

for my haste? Have I not heard her footstep on the stair? Do I not distinguish that heavy and horrible beating of her heart? MADMAN!" here he sprang furiously to his feet, and shrieked out his syllables, as if in the effort he were giving up his soul—"MADMAN! I TELL YOU THAT SHE NOW STANDS WITHOUT THE DOOR!"

As if in the superhuman energy of his utterance there had been found the potency of a spell—the huge antique panels to which the speaker pointed,<sup>10</sup> threw slowly back, upon the instant, their ponderous and ebony jaws. It was the work of the rushing gust—but then without those doors there DID stand the lofty and enshrouded figure of the lady Madeline of Usher. There was blood upon her white robes, and the evidence of some bitter struggle upon every portion of her emaciated frame. For a moment she remained trembling and reeling to and fro upon the threshold, then, with a low moaning cry, fell heavily inward upon the person of her brother, and in her<sup>20</sup> violent and now final death agonies, bore him to the

floor a corpse, and a victim to the terrors he had anticipated.

From that chamber, and from that mansion, I fled aghast. The storm was still abroad in all its wrath as I found myself crossing the old causeway. Suddenly there shot along the path a wild light, and I turned to see whence a gleam so unusual could have issued; for the vast house and its shadows were alone behind me. The radiance was that of the full, setting, and blood-red moon which now shone vividly through that once barely-discernible fissure of which I have before spoken as extending from the roof of the building, in a zigzag direction, to the base. While I gazed, this fissure rapidly widened—there came a fierce breath of the whirlwind—the entire orb of the satellite burst at once upon my sight—my brain reeled as I saw the mighty walls rushing asunder—there was a long tumultuous shouting sound like the voice of a thousand waters—and the deep and dank tarn at my feet closed sullenly and silently over the fragments of the "HOUSE OF USHER."

### *A Descent into the Maelström*<sup>47</sup>

*The ways of God in Nature, as in Providence, are not as our ways; nor are the models that we frame any way commensurate to the vastness, profundity, and unsearchableness of His works, which have a depth in them greater than the well of Democritus.* JOSEPH GLANVILLE.<sup>48</sup>

We had now reached the summit of the loftiest crag. For some minutes the old man seemed too much exhausted to speak.

"Not long ago," said he at length, "and I could<sup>30</sup> have guided you on this route as well as the youngest of my sons; but, about three years past, there happened to me an event such as never happened before to mortal man—or at least such as no man ever survived to tell of—and the six hours of deadly terror which I then endured have broken me up body and soul. You suppose me a *very* old man—but I am not. It took less than a single day to change these hairs from a jetty black to white, to weaken my limbs, and to unstring my nerves, so that I tremble at the least<sup>40</sup> exertion, and am frightened at a shadow. Do you

know I can scarcely look over this little cliff without getting giddy?"

The "little cliff," upon whose edge he had so carelessly thrown himself down to rest that the weightier portion of his body hung over it, while he was only kept from falling by the tenure of his elbow on its extreme and slippery edge—this "little cliff" arose, a sheer unobstructed precipice of black shining rock, some fifteen or sixteen hundred feet from the world of crags beneath us. Nothing would have tempted me to within half a dozen yards of its brink. In truth so deeply was I excited by the perilous position of my companion, that I fell at full length upon the ground, clung to the shrubs around me, and dared not even glance upward at the sky—while I struggled in vain to divest myself of the idea that the very foundations of the mountain were in danger from the fury of the winds. It was long before I could reason myself into sufficient courage to sit up and look out into the distance.

"You must get over these fancies," said the guide, "for I have brought you here that you might have the best possible view of the scene of that event I

<sup>47</sup> First published in *Graham's Magazine* for May, 1841.

<sup>48</sup> Note that the motto for "Ligeia" also is presumably taken from Glanvill (Poe spelled the name correctly in "Ligeia").

mentioned—and to tell you the whole story with the spot just under your eye.

"We are now," he continued, in that particularizing manner which distinguished him—"we are now close upon the Norwegian coast—in the sixty-eighth degree of latitude—in the great province of Nordland—and in the dreary district of Lofoden. The mountain upon whose top we sit is Helseggen, the Cloudy. Now raise yourself up a little higher—hold on to the grass if you feel giddy—so—and look out, beyond the belt of vapor beneath us, into the sea."

I looked dizzily, and beheld a wide expanse of ocean, whose waters wore so inky a hue as to bring at once to my mind the Nubian geographer's account of the *Mare Tenebrarum*.<sup>40</sup> A panorama more desolately desolate no human imagination can conceive. To the right and left, as far as the eye could reach, there lay outstretched, like ramparts of the world, lines of horridly black and beetling cliff, whose character of gloom was but the more forcibly illustrated by the surf which reared high up against it its white and ghastly crest, howling and shrieking forever. Just opposite the promontory upon whose apex we were placed, and at a distance of some five or six miles out at sea, there was visible a small, bleak-looking island; or, more properly, its position was discernible through the wilderness of surge in which it was enveloped. About two miles nearer the land arose another of smaller size, hideously craggy and barren, and encompassed at various intervals by a cluster of dark rocks.

The appearance of the ocean, in the space between the more distant island and the shore, had something very unusual about it. Although, at the time, so strong a gale was blowing landward that a brig in the remote offing lay to under a double-reefed trysail, and constantly plunged her whole hull out of sight, still, there was here nothing like a regular swell, but only a short, quick, angry cross-dashing of water in every direction—as well in the teeth of the wind as otherwise. Of foam there was little except in the immediate vicinity of the rocks.

"The island in the distance," resumed the old man, "is called by the Norwegians Vurrgh. The one midway is Moskoe. That a mile to the northward is Ambaaren. Yonder are Iflesen, Hoeyholm, Kieldholm, Suarven, and Buckholm. Farther off—between Mos-

koe and Vurrgh—are Otterholm, Flimen, Sandflesen, and Skarholm. These are the true names of the places—but why it has been thought necessary to name them at all is more than either you or I can understand. Do you hear anything? Do you see any change in the water?"

We had now been about ten minutes upon the top of Helseggen, to which we had ascended from the interior of Lofoden, so that we had caught no glimpse of the sea until it had burst upon us from the summit. As the old man spoke, I became aware of a loud and gradually increasing sound, like the moaning of a vast herd of buffaloes upon an American prairie; and at the same moment I perceived that what seamen term the *chopping* character of the ocean beneath us, was rapidly changing into a current which set to the eastward. Even while I gazed, this current acquired a monstrous velocity. Each moment added to its speed—to its headlong impetuosity. In five minutes the whole sea, as far as Vurrgh, was lashed into ungovernable fury; but it was between Moskoe and the coast that the main uproar held its sway. Here the vast bed of the waters, seamed and scarred into a thousand conflicting channels, burst suddenly into frenzied convulsion—heaving, boiling, hissing—gyrating in gigantic and innumerable vortices, and all whirling and plunging on to the eastward with a rapidity which water never elsewhere assumes, except in precipitous descents.

In a few minutes more, there came over the scene another radical alteration. The general surface grew somewhat more smooth, and the whirlpools, one by one, disappeared, while prodigious streaks of foam became apparent where none had been seen before. These streaks, at length, spreading out to a great distance, and entering into combination, took unto themselves the gyratory motion of the subsided vortices, and seemed to form the germ of another more vast. Suddenly—very suddenly—this assumed a distinct and definite existence, in a circle of more than a mile in diameter. The edge of the whirl was represented by a broad belt of gleaming spray; but no particle of this slipped into the mouth of the terrific funnel, whose interior, as far as the eye could fathom it, was a smooth, shining, jet-black wall of water, inclined to the horizon at an angle of some forty-five degrees, speeding dizzily round and round with a swaying and sweltering motion, and sending forth to the winds an appalling voice, half shriek, half roar,

<sup>40</sup> "The sea of darkness," or outer ocean, *i.e.*, the Atlantic.

such as not even the mighty cataract of Niagara ever lifts up in its agony to Heaven.

The mountain trembled to its very base, and the rock rocked. I threw myself upon my face, and clung to the scant herbage in an excess of nervous agitation.

"This," said I at length, to the old man—"this *can* be nothing else than the great whirlpool of the Maelström."

"So it is sometimes termed," said he. "We Norwegians call it the Moskoe-ström, from the island of 10 Moskoe in the midway."

The ordinary accounts of this vortex had by no means prepared me for what I saw. That of Jonas Ramus, which is perhaps the most circumstantial of any, cannot impart the faintest conception either of the magnificence or of the horror of the scene—or of the wild bewildering sense of *the novel* which confounds the beholder. I am not sure from what point of view the writer in question surveyed it, nor at what time; but it could neither have been from the 20 summit of Helseggen, nor during a storm. There are some passages of his description, nevertheless, which may be quoted for their details, although their effect is exceedingly feeble in conveying an impression of the spectacle.

"Between Lofoden and Moskoe," he says, "the depth of the water is between thirty-six and forty fathoms; but on the other side, toward Ver (Vurrgh), this depth decreases so as not to afford a convenient passage for a vessel, without the risk of splitting on 30 the rocks, which happens even in the calmest weather. When it is flood, the stream runs up the country between Lofoden and Moskoe with a boisterous rapidity; but the roar of its impetuous ebb to the sea is scarce equaled by the loudest and most dreadful cataracts, the noise being heard several leagues off; and the vortices or pits are of such an extent and depth, that if a ship comes within its attraction, it is inevitably absorbed and carried down to the bottom, and there beat to pieces against the rocks; and when 40 the water relaxes, the fragments thereof are thrown up again. But these intervals of tranquillity are only at the turn of the ebb and flood, and in calm weather, and last but a quarter of an hour, its violence gradually returning. When the stream is most boisterous, and its fury heightened by a storm, it is dangerous to come within a Norway mile <sup>50</sup> of it. Boats, yachts, and ships have been carried away by not guarding

against it before they were within its reach. It likewise happens frequently that whales come too near the stream, and are overpowered by its violence; but then it is impossible to describe their howlings and bellowings in their fruitless struggles to disengage themselves. A bear once, attempting to swim from Lofoden to Moskoe, was caught by the stream and borne down, while he roared terribly, so as to be heard on shore. Large stocks of firs and pine trees, after being absorbed by the current, rise again broken and torn to such a degree as if bristles grew upon them. This plainly shows the bottom to consist of craggy rocks, among which they are whirled to and fro. This stream is regulated by the flux and reflux of the sea—it being constantly high and low water every six hours. In the year 1645, early in the morning of Sexagesima Sunday, it raged with such noise and impetuosity that the very stones of the houses on the coast fell to the ground."

In regard to the depth of the water, I could not see how this could have been ascertained at all in the immediate vicinity of the vortex. The "forty fathoms" must have reference only to portions of the channel close upon the shore either of Moskoe or Lofoden. The depth in the center of the Moskoe-ström must be immeasurably greater; and no better proof of this fact is necessary than can be obtained from even the sidelong glance into the abyss of the whirl which may be had from the highest crag of Helseggen. Looking down from this pinnacle upon the howling Phlegethon below, I could not help smiling at the simplicity with which the honest Jonas Ramus records, as a matter difficult of belief, the anecdotes of the whales and the bears; for it appeared to me, in fact, a self-evident thing that the largest ships of the line in existence, coming within the influence of that deadly attraction, could resist it as little as a feather the hurricane, and must disappear bodily and at once.

The attempts to account for the phenomenon—some of which, I remember, seemed to me sufficiently plausible in perusal—now wore a very different and unsatisfactory aspect. The idea generally received is that this, as well as three smaller vortices among the Feroe Islands, "have no other cause than the collision of waves rising and falling, at flux and reflux, against a ridge of rocks and shelves, which confines the water so that it precipitates itself like a cataract; and thus the higher the flood rises, the deeper must the

<sup>50</sup> About four and a half English miles.

fall be, and the natural result of all is a whirlpool or vortex, the prodigious suction of which is sufficiently known by lesser experiments.”—These are the words of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*. Kircher and others imagine that in the center of the channel of the Maelström is an abyss penetrating the globe, and issuing in some very remote part—the Gulf of Bothnia being somewhat decidedly named in one instance. This opinion, idle in itself, was the one to which, as I gazed, my imagination most readily assented; and, <sup>10</sup> mentioning it to the guide, I was rather surprised to hear him say that, although it was the view almost universally entertained of the subject by the Norwegians, it nevertheless was not his own. As to the former notion he confessed his inability to comprehend it; and here I agreed with him—for, however conclusive on paper, it becomes altogether unintelligible, and even absurd, amid the thunder of the abyss.

“You have had a good look at the whirl now,” <sup>20</sup> said the old man, “and if you will creep round this crag, so as to get in its lee, and deaden the roar of the water, I will tell you a story that will convince you I ought to know something of the Moskoe-ström.”

I placed myself as desired, and he proceeded.

“Myself and my two brothers once owned a schooner-rigged smack of about seventy tons burden, with which we were in the habit of fishing among the islands beyond Moskoe, nearly to Vurgh. <sup>30</sup> In all violent eddies at sea there is good fishing, at proper opportunities, if one has only the courage to attempt it; but among the whole of the Lofoden coastmen we three were the only ones who made a regular business of going out to the islands, as I tell you. The usual grounds are a great way lower down to the southward. There fish can be got at all hours, without much risk, and therefore these places are preferred. The choice spots over here among the rocks, however, not only yield the finest variety, but <sup>40</sup> in far greater abundance; so that we often got in a single day what the more timid of the craft could not scrape together in a week. In fact, we made it a matter of desperate speculation—the risk of life standing instead of labor, and courage answering for capital.

“We kept the smack in a cove about five miles higher up the coast than this; and it was our practice, in fine weather, to take advantage of the fifteen min-

utes’ slack to push across the main channel of the Moskoe-ström, far above the pool, and then drop down upon anchorage somewhere near Otterholm, or Sandflescn, where the eddies are not so violent as elsewhere. Here we used to remain until near time for slack-water again, when we weighed and made for home. We never set out upon this expedition without a steady side wind for going and coming—one that we felt sure would not fail us before our return—and we seldom made a miscalculation upon this point. Twice, during six years, we were forced to stay all night at anchor on account of a dead calm, which is a rare thing indeed just about here; and once we had to remain on the grounds nearly a week, starving to death, owing to a gale which blew up shortly after our arrival, and made the channel too boisterous to be thought of. Upon this occasion we should have been driven out to sea in spite of everything (for the whirlpools threw us round and round so violently that, at length, we fouled our anchor and dragged it) if it had not been that we drifted into one of the innumerable cross currents—here to-day and gone tomorrow—which drove us under the lee of Flimen, where, by good luck, we brought up.

“I could not tell you the twentieth part of the difficulties we encountered ‘on the ground’—it is a bad spot to be in, even in good weather—but we made shift always to run the gauntlet of the Moskoe-ström itself without accident; although at times my heart has been in my mouth when we happened to be a minute or so behind or before the slack. The wind sometimes was not as strong as we thought it at starting, and then we made rather less way than we could wish, while the current rendered the smack unmanageable. My eldest brother had a son eighteen years old, and I had two stout boys of my own. These would have been of great assistance at such times, in using the sweeps, as well as afterward in fishing—but, somehow, although we ran the risk ourselves, we had not the heart to let the young ones get into the danger—for, after all said and done, it *was* a horrible danger, and that is the truth.

“It is now within a few days of three years since what I am going to tell you occurred. It was on the tenth of July, 18—, a day which the people of this part of the world will never forget—for it was one in which blew the most terrible hurricane that ever came out of the heavens. And yet all the morning, and indeed until late in the afternoon, there was a



gentle and steady breeze from the southwest, while the sun shone brightly, so that the oldest seaman among us could not have foreseen what was to follow.

"The three of us—my two brothers and myself—had crossed over to the islands about two o'clock P.M., and soon nearly loaded the smack with fine fish, which, we all remarked, were more plenty that day than we had ever known them. It was just seven, *by my watch*, when we weighed and started for home, so as to make the worst of the Ström at slack water, 10 which we knew would be at eight.

"We set out with a fresh wind on our starboard quarter, and for some time spanked along at a great rate, never dreaming of danger, for indeed we saw not the slightest reason to apprehend it. All at once we were taken aback by a breeze from over Helsegen. This was most unusual—something that had never happened to us before—and I began to feel a little uncasy, without exactly knowing why. We put the boat on the wind, but could make no headway 20 at all for the eddies, and I was upon the point of proposing to return to the anchorage, when, looking astern, we saw the whole horizon covered with a singular copper-colored cloud that rose with the most amazing velocity.

"In the meantime the breeze that had headed us off fell away, and we were dead becalmed, drifting about in every direction. This state of things, however, did not last long enough to give us time to think about it. In less than a minute the storm was 30 upon us—in less than two the sky was entirely overcast—and what with this and the driving spray, it became suddenly so dark that we could not see each other in the smack.

"Such a hurricane as then blew it is folly to attempt describing. The oldest seaman in Norway never experienced anything like it. We had let our sails go by the run before it cleverly took us; but, at the first puff, both our masts went by the board as if they had been sawed off—the mainmast taking with 40 it my youngest brother, who had lashed himself to it for safety.

"Our boat was the lightest feather of a thing that ever sat upon water. It had a complete flush deck, with only a small hatch near the bow, and this hatch it had always been our custom to batten down when about to cross the Ström, by way of precaution against the chopping seas. But for this circumstance we should have foundered at once—for we lay en-

tirely buried for some moments. How my elder brother escape destruction I cannot say, for I never had an opportunity of ascertaining. For my part, as soon as I had let the foresail run, I threw myself flat on deck, with my feet against the narrow gunwale of the bow, and with my hands grasping a ringbolt near the foot of the foremast. It was mere instinct that prompted me to do this—which was undoubtedly the very best thing I could have done—for I was too much flurried to think.

"For some moments we were completely deluged, as I say, and all this time I held my breath, and clung to the bolt. When I could stand it no longer I raised myself upon my knees, still keeping hold with my hands, and thus got my head clear. Presently our little boat gave herself a shake, just as a dog does in coming out of the water, and thus rid herself, in some measure, of the seas. I was now trying to get the better of the stupor that had come over me, and to collect my senses so as to see what was to be done, when I felt somebody grasp my arm. It was my elder brother, and my heart leaped for joy, for I had made sure that he was overboard—but the next moment all this joy was turned into horror—for he put his mouth close to my ear, and screamed out the word '*Moskoe-ström!*'"

"No one will ever know what my feelings were at that moment. I shook from head to foot as if I had had the most violent fit of the ague. I knew what he meant by that one word well enough—I knew that he wished to make me understand. With the wind that now drove us on, we were bound for the whirl of the Ström, and nothing could save us!

"You perceive that in crossing the Ström *channel*, we always went a long way up above the whirl, even in the calmest weather, and then had to wait and watch carefully for the slack—but now we were driving right upon the pool itself, and in such a hurricane as this! 'To be sure,' I thought, 'we shall get there just about the slack—there is some little hope in that'—but in the next moment I cursed myself for being so great a fool as to dream of hope at all. I knew very well that we were doomed, had we been ten times a ninety-gun ship.

"By this time the first fury of the tempest had spent itself, or perhaps we did not feel it so much as we scudded before it; but at all events the seas, which at first had been kept down by the wind, and lay flat and frothing now got up into absolute moun-



tains. A singular change, too, had come over the heavens. Around in every direction it was still as black as pitch, but nearly overhead there burst out, all at once, a circular rift of clear sky—as clear as I ever saw—and of a deep bright blue—and through it there blazed forth the full moon with a luster that I never before knew her to wear. She lit up everything about us with the greatest distinctness—but, oh God, what a scene it was to light up!

"I now made one or two attempts to speak to my brother—but, in some manner which I could not understand, the din had so increased that I could not make him hear a single word, although I screamed at the top of my voice in his ear. Presently he shook his head, looking as pale as death, and held up one of his fingers, as if to say *listen!*

"At first I could not make out what he meant—but soon a hideous thought flashed upon me. I dragged my watch from its fob. It was not going. I glanced at its face by the moonlight, and then burst into tears as I flung it far away into the ocean. *It had run down at seven o'clock! We were behind the time of the slack, and the whirl of the Ström was in full fury!*

"When a boat is well built, properly trimmed, and not deep laden, the waves in a strong gale, when she is going large, seem always to slip from beneath her—which appears very strange to a landsman—and this is what is called *riding*, in sea phrase.

"Well, so far we had ridden the swells very cleverly; but presently a gigantic sea happened to take us right under the counter, and bore us with it as it rose—up—up—as if into the sky. I would not have believed that any wave could rise so high. And then down we came with a sweep, a slide, and a plunge, that made me feel sick and dizzy, as if I was falling from some lofty mountain-top in a dream. But while we were up I had thrown a quick glance around—and that one glance was all-sufficient. I saw our exact position in an instant. The Moskoe-ström whirlpool was about a quarter of a mile dead ahead—but no more like the everyday Moskoe-ström, than the whirl as you now see it is like a mill race. If I had not known where we were, and what we had to expect, I should not have recognized the place at all. As it was, I involuntarily closed my eyes in horror. The lids clenched themselves together as if in a spasm.

"It could not have been more than two minutes

afterwards until we suddenly felt the waves subside, and were enveloped in foam. The boat made a sharp half turn to larboard, and then shot off in its new direction like a thunderbolt. At the same moment the roaring noise of the water was completely drowned in a kind of shrill shriek—such a sound as you might imagine given out by the water-pipes of many thousand steam vessels, letting off their steam all together. We were now in the belt of surf that always surrounds the whirl; and I thought, of course, that another moment would plunge us into the abyss—down which we could only see indistinctly on account of the amazing velocity with which we were borne along. The boat did not seem to sink into the water at all, but to skim like an air-bubble upon the surface of the surge. Her starboard side was next the whirl, and on the larboard arose the world of ocean we had left. It stood like a huge writhing wall between us and the horizon.

"It may appear strange, but now, when we were in the very jaws of the gulf, I felt more composed than when we were only approaching it. Having made up my mind to hope no more, I got rid of a great deal of that terror which unmanned me at first. I suppose it was despair that strung my nerves.

"It may look like boasting—but what I tell you is truth—I began to reflect how magnificent a thing it was to die in such a manner, and how foolish it was in me to think of so paltry a consideration as my own individual life, in view of so wonderful a manifestation of God's power. I do believe that I blushed with shame when this idea crossed my mind. After a little while I became possessed with the keenest curiosity about the whirl itself. I positively felt a *wish* to explore its depths, even at the sacrifice I was going to make; and my principal grief was that I should never be able to tell my old companions on shore about the mysteries I should see. These, no doubt, were singular fancies to occupy a man's mind in such extremity—and I have often thought since, that the revolutions of the boat around the pool might have rendered me a little light-headed.

"There was another circumstance which tended to restore my self-possession; and this was the cessation of the wind, which could not reach us in our present situation—for, as you saw yourself, the belt of surf is considerably lower than the general bed of the ocean, and this latter now towered above us, a high, black, mountainous ridge. If you have never been

at sea in a heavy gale, you can form no idea of the confusion of mind occasioned by the wind and spray together. They blind, deafen, and strangle you, and take away all power of action or reflection. But we were now, in a great measure, rid of these annoyances—just as death-condemned felons in prisons are allowed petty indulgencies, forbidden them while their doom is yet uncertain.

"How often we made the circuit of the belt it is impossible to say. We careered round and round for perhaps an hour, flying rather than floating, getting gradually more and more into the middle of the surge, and then nearer and nearer to its horrible inner edge. All this time I had never let go of the ring-bolt. My brother was at the stern, holding on to a small empty water-cask which had been securely lashed under the coop of the counter, and was the only thing on deck that had not been swept overboard when the gale first took us. As we approached the brink of the pit he let go his hold upon this, and made for the ring, from which, in the agony of his terror, he endeavored to force my hands, as it was not large enough to afford us both a secure grasp. I never felt deeper grief than when I saw him attempt this act—although I knew he was a madman when he did it—a raving maniac through sheer fright. I did not care, however, to contest the point with him. I knew it could make no difference whether either of us held on at all; so I let him have the bolt, and went astern to the cask. This there was no great difficulty in doing; for the smack flew round steadily enough, and upon an even keel—only swaying to and fro, with the immense sweeps and swelters of the whirl. Scarcely had I secured myself in my new position, when we gave a wild lurch to starboard, and rushed headlong into the abyss. I muttered a hurried prayer to God, and thought all was over.

"As I felt the sickening sweep of the descent, I had instinctively tightened my hold upon the barrel, and closed my eyes. For some seconds I dared not open them—while I expected instant destruction, and wondered that I was not already in my death-struggles with the water. But moment after moment elapsed. I still lived. The sense of falling had ceased; and the motion of the vessel seemed much as it had been before, while in the belt of foam, with the exception that she now lay more along. I took courage and looked once again upon the scene.

"Never shall I forget the sensations of awe, horror,

and admiration with which I gazed about me. The boat appeared to be hanging, as if by magic, midway down, upon the interior surface of a funnel vast in circumference, prodigious in depth, and whose perfectly smooth sides might have been mistaken for ebony, but for the bewildering rapidity with which they spun around, and for the gleaming and ghastly radiance they shot forth, as the rays of the full moon, from that circular rift amid the clouds which I have already described, streamed in a flood of golden glory along the black walls, and far away down into the inmost recesses of the abyss.

"At first I was too much confused to observe anything accurately. The general burst of terrific grandeur was all that I beheld. When I recovered myself a little, however, my gaze fell instinctively downward. In this direction I was able to obtain an unobstructed view, from the manner in which the smack hung on the inclined surface of the pool. She was quite upon an even keel—that is to say, her deck lay in a plane parallel with that of the water—but this latter sloped at an angle of more than forty-five degrees, so that we seemed to be lying upon our beam-ends. I could not help observing, nevertheless, that I had scarcely more difficulty in maintaining my hold and footing in this situation, than if we had been upon a dead level; and this, I suppose, was owing to the speed at which we revolved.

"The rays of the moon seemed to search the very bottom of the profound gulf; but still I could make out nothing distinctly, on account of a thick mist in which everything there was enveloped, and over which there hung a magnificent rainbow, like that narrow and tottering bridge which Mussulmen say is the only pathway between Time and Eternity. This mist, or spray, was no doubt occasioned by the clashing of the great walls of the funnel, as they all met together at the bottom—but the yell that went up to the heavens from out of that mist, I dare not attempt to describe.

"Our first slide into the abyss itself, from the belt of foam above, had carried us to a great distance down the slope; but our farther descent was by no means proportionate. Round and round we swept—not with any uniform movement, but in dizzying swings and jerks, that sent us sometimes only a few hundred yards—sometimes nearly the complete circuit of the whirl. Our progress downward, at each revolution, was slow, but very perceptible.

"Looking about me upon the wide waste of liquid ebony on which we were thus borne, I perceived that our boat was not the only object in the embrace of the whirl. Both above and below us were visible fragments of vessels, large masses of building timber and trunks of trees, with many smaller articles, such as pieces of house furniture, broken boxes, barrels, and staves. I have already described the unnatural curiosity which had taken the place of my original terrors. It appeared to grow upon me as I drew nearer and nearer to my dreadful doom. I now began to watch, with a strange interest, the numerous things that floated in our company. I *must* have been delirious—for I even sought *amusement* in speculating upon the relative velocities of their several descents toward the foam below. 'This fir tree,' I found myself at one time saying, 'will certainly be the next thing that takes the awful plunge and disappears,'—and then I was disappointed to find that the wreck of a Dutch merchant ship overtook it and went down before. 20 At length, after making several guesses of this nature, and being deceived in all—this fact—the fact of my invariable miscalculation, set me upon a train of reflection that made my limbs again tremble, and my heart beat heavily once more.

"It was not a new terror that thus affected me, but the dawn of a more exciting *hope*. This hope arose partly from memory, and partly from present observation. I called to mind the great variety of buoyant matter that strewed the coast of Lofoden, 30 having been absorbed and then thrown forth by the Moskoë-ström. By far the greater number of the articles were shattered in the most extraordinary way—so chafed and roughened as to have the appearance of being stuck full of splinters—but then I distinctly recollected that there were *some* of them which were not disfigured at all. Now I could not account for this difference except by supposing that the roughened fragments were the only ones which had been *completely absorbed*—that the others had 40 entered the whirl at so late a period of the tide, or, from some reason, had descended so slowly after entering, that they did not reach the bottom before the turn of the flood came, or of the ebb, as the case might be. I conceived it possible, in either instance, that they might thus be whirled up again to the level of the ocean, without undergoing the fate of those which had been drawn in more early or absorbed more rapidly. I made, also, three important

observations. The first was, that as a general rule, the larger the bodies were, the more rapid their descent; the second, that, between two masses of equal extent, the one spherical, and the other of *any other shape*, the superiority in speed of descent was with the sphere; the third, that, between two masses of equal size, the one cylindrical, and the other of any other shape, the cylinder was absorbed the more slowly. Since my escape, I have had several conversations on this subject with an old schoolmaster of the district; and it was from him that I learned the use of the words 'cylinder' and 'sphere.' He explained to me—although I have forgotten the explanation—how what I observed was, in fact, the natural consequence of the forms of the floating fragments, and showed me how it happened that a cylinder, swimming in a vortex, offered more resistance to its suction, and was drawn in with greater difficulty, than an equally bulky body, of any form whatever.\*

"There was one startling circumstance which went a great way in enforcing these observations, and rendering me anxious to turn them to account, and this was that, at every revolution, we passed something like a barrel, or else the yard or the mast of a vessel, while many of these things, which had been on our level when I first opened my eyes upon the wonders of the whirlpool, were now high up above us, and seemed to have moved but little from their original station.

"I no longer hesitated what to do. I resolved to lash myself securely to the water-cask upon which I now held, to cut it loose from the counter, and to throw myself with it into the water. I attracted my brother's attention by signs, pointed to the floating barrels that came near us, and did everything in my power to make him understand what I was about to do. I thought at length that he comprehended my design—but, whether this was the case or not, he shook his head despairingly, and refused to move from his station by the ring-bolt. It was impossible to reach him; the emergency admitted of no delay; and so, with a bitter struggle, I resigned him to his fate, fastened myself to the cask by means of the lashings which secured it to the counter, and pre-

\* See Archimedes, "*De Incidentibus in Fluido*."—lib. 2. [Poe's reference is to one of the preserved treatises of Archimedes, the title of which is usually translated as *On Bodies Floating in Liquids*. It is in two books, on the principles of floating, and the positions of equilibrium of certain kinds of floating bodies.]

cipitated myself with it into the sea, without another moment's hesitation.

"The result was precisely what I had hoped it might be. As it is myself who now tell you this tale—as you see that I *did* escape—and as you are already in possession of the mode in which this escape was effected, and must therefore anticipate all that I have farther to say—I will bring my story quickly to conclusion. It might have been an hour, or thereabout, after my quitting the smack, when, having descended to a vast distance beneath me, it made three or four wild gyrations in rapid succession, and, bearing my loved brother with it, plunged headlong, at once and forever, into the chaos of foam below. The barrel to which I was attached sunk very little farther than half the distance between the bottom of the gulf and the spot at which I leaped overboard, before a great change took place in the character of the whirlpool. The slope of the sides of the vast funnel became momentarily less and less steep. The gyrations of the whirl grew, gradually, less and less violent. By degrees, the froth and the rainbow disappeared, and the bottom of the gulf seemed slowly to uprise. The sky was clear, the winds had gone down, and the full moon was setting radiantly in the west, when I found myself on the surface of the ocean, in full view of the shores of Lofoden, and above the spot where the pool of the Moskoe-ström *had been*. It was the hour of the slack, but the sea still heaved in mountainous waves from the effects of the hurricane. I was borne violently into the channel of the Ström, and in a few minutes was hurried down the coast into the 'grounds' of the fishermen. A boat picked me up—exhausted from fatigue—and (now that the danger was removed) speechless from the memory of its horror. Those who drew me on board were my old mates and daily companions, but they knew me no more than they would have known a traveler from the spirit-land. My hair, which had been raven-black the day before, was as white as you see it now. They say, too, that the whole expression of my countenance had changed. I told them my story—they did not believe it. I now tell it to you—and I can scarcely expect you to put more faith in it than did the merry fishermen of Lofoden."

1841

### Eleonora<sup>51</sup>

*Sub conservatione formæ specificæ salva anima.*<sup>52</sup>  
RAYMOND LULLY.

I am come of a race noted for vigor of fancy and ardor of passion. Men have called me mad; but the question is not yet settled, whether madness is or is not the loftiest intelligence: whether much that is glorious, whether all that is profound, does not spring from disease of thought—from *moods* of mind exalted at the expense of the general intellect. They who dream by day are cognizant of many things which escape those who dream only by night. In their gray visions they obtain glimpses of eternity, and thrill in awaking to find that they have been upon the verge of the great secret. In snatches, they learn something of the wisdom which is of good, and more of the mere knowledge which is of evil. They penetrate, however rudderless or compassless, into the vast ocean of the "light ineffable"; and again, like the

adventures of the Nubian geographer, "*aggressi sunt mare tenebrarum, quid in eo esset exploraturi.*"<sup>53</sup>

We will say, then, that I am mad. I grant, at least, that there are two distinct conditions of my mental existence: the condition of a lucid reason, not to be disputed, and belonging to the memory of events forming the first epoch of my life—and a condition of shadow and doubt, appertaining to the present, and to the recollection of what constitutes the second great era of my being. Therefore what I shall tell of the earlier period, believe; and to what I may relate of the later time, give only such credit as may seem due; or doubt it altogether; or, if doubt it ye cannot, then play unto its riddle the *Œdipus*.<sup>54</sup>

She whom I loved in youth, and of whom I now pen calmly and distinctly these remembrances, was the sole daughter of the only sister of my mother

<sup>51</sup> First published in *The Gift*, 1842.

<sup>52</sup> "With the preservation of a specific form, the soul is secure."

<sup>53</sup> "They entered the sea of darkness in order that they might explore what was therein." Claudius Ptolemy (the Nubian geographer).

<sup>54</sup> The king of Thebes, in Greek mythology, who freed the city from the Sphinx by solving her riddle.

long departed. Elconora was the name of my cousin. We had always dwelled together, beneath a tropical sun, in the Valley of the Many-Colored Grass. No unguided footstep ever came upon that vale; for it lay far away up among a range of giant hills that hung beetling around about it, shutting out the sunlight from its sweetest recesses. No path was trodden in its vicinity; and, to reach our happy home, there was need of putting back with force the foliage of many thousands of forest trees, and of crushing to death the glories of many millions of fragrant flowers. Thus it was that we lived all alone, knowing nothing of the world without the valley,—I, and my cousin, and her mother.

From the dim regions beyond the mountains at the upper end of our encircled domain, there crept out a narrow and deep river, brighter than all save the eyes of Elconora; and, winding stealthily about in mazy courses, it passed away at length through a shadowy gorge, among hills still dimmer than those whence it had issued. We called it the "River of Silence"; for there seemed to be a hushing influence in its flow. No murmur arose from its bed, and so gently it wandered along that the pearly pebbles upon which we loved to gaze, far down within its bosom, stirred not at all, but lay in a motionless content, each in its own old station, shining on gloriously forever.

The margin of the river, and of the many dazzling rivulets that glided through devious ways into its channel, as well as the spaces that extended from the margins away down into the depths of the streams until they reached the bed of pebbles at the bottom,—these spots, not less than the whole surface of the valley, from the river to the mountains that girdled it in, were carpeted all by a soft green grass, thick, short, perfectly even, and vanilla-perfumed, but so besprinkled throughout with the yellow buttercup, the white daisy, the purple violet, and the ruby-red asphodel, that its exceeding beauty spoke to our hearts in loud tones of the love and of the glory of God.

And, here and there, in groves about this grass, like wildernesses of dreams, sprang up fantastic trees, whose tall slender stems stood not upright, but slanted gracefully towards the light that peered at noonday into the center of the valley. Their bark was speckled with the vivid alternate splendor of ebony and silver, and was smoother than all save the

checks of Elconora; so that, but for the brilliant green of the huge leaves that spread from their summits in long, tremulous lines, dallying with the Zephyrs, one might have fancied them giant serpents of Syria doing homage to their Sovereign the Sun.

Hand in hand about this valley, for fifteen years, roamed I with Elconora before Love entered within our hearts. It was one evening at the close of the third lustrum<sup>55</sup> of her life, and of the fourth of my own, that we sat, locked in each other's embrace, beneath the serpent-like trees, and looked down within the waters of the River of Silence at our images therein. We spoke no words during the rest of that sweet day; and our words even upon the morrow were tremulous and few. We had drawn the god Eros from that wave, and now we felt that he had enkindled within us the fiery souls of our forefathers. The passions which had for centuries distinguished our race came thronging with the fancies for which they had been equally noted, and together breathed a delirious bliss over the Valley of the Many-Colored Grass. A change fell upon all things. Strange, brilliant flowers, star-shaped, burst out upon the trees where no flowers had been known before. The tints of the green carpet deepened; and when, one by one, the white daisies shrank away, there sprang up in place of them ten by ten of the ruby-red asphodel. And life arose in our paths; for the tall flamingo, hitherto unseen, with all gay glowing birds, flaunted his scarlet plumage before us. The golden and silver fish haunted the river, out of the bosom of which issued, little by little, a murmur that swelled, at length, into a lulling melody more divine than that of the harp of Æolus—sweeter than all save the voice of Elconora. And now, too, a voluminous cloud, which we had long watched in the regions of Hesper,<sup>56</sup> floated out thence, all gorgeous in crimson and gold, and, settling in peace above us, sank, day by day, lower and lower, until its edges rested upon the tops of the mountains, turning all their dimness into magnificence, and shutting us up, as if forever, within a magic prison-house of grandeur and of glory.

The loveliness of Elconora was that of the Seraphim; but she was a maiden artless and innocent as the brief life she had led among the flowers. No guile disguised the fervor of love which animated her heart, and she examined with me its inmost recesses as we

<sup>55</sup> Period of five years.

<sup>56</sup> The west, as Hesper is the evening star.

walked together in the Valley of the Many-Colored Grass, and discoursed of the mighty changes which had lately taken place therein.

At length, having spoken one day, in tears, of the last sad change which must befall Humanity, she thenceforward dwelt only upon this one sorrowful theme, interweaving it into all our converse, as, in the songs of the bard of Schiraz,<sup>57</sup> the same images are found occurring again and again in every impressive variation of phrase.

She had seen that the finger of Death was upon her bosom—that, like the ephemeron,<sup>58</sup> she had been made perfect in loveliness only to die; but the terrors of the grave to her lay solely in a consideration which she revealed to me one evening at twilight, by the banks of the River of Silence. She grieved to think that, having entombed her in the Valley of the Many-Colored Grass, I would quit forever its happy recesses, transferring the love which now was so passionately her own to some maiden of the outer and everyday world. And then and there I threw myself hurriedly at the feet of Eleonora, and offered up a vow to herself and to Heaven that I would never bind myself in marriage to any daughter of Earth—that I would in no manner prove recreant to her dear memory, or to the memory of the devout affection with which she had blessed me. And I called the Mighty Ruler of the Universe to witness the pious solemnity of my vow. And the curse which I invoked of *Him* and of her, a saint in *Heclosion*,<sup>59</sup> should I prove traitorous to that promise, involved a penalty the exceeding great horror of which will not permit me to make record of it here. And the bright eyes of Eleonora grew brighter at my words; and she sighed as if a deadly burden had been taken from her breast; and she trembled and very bitterly wept; but she made acceptance of the vow (for what was she but a child?) and it made easy to her the bed of her death. And she said to me, not many days afterwards, tranquilly dying, that, because of what I had done for the comfort of her spirit, she would watch over me in that spirit when departed, and, if so it were permitted her, return to me visibly in the watches of the night; but, if this thing were, indeed, beyond the power of the souls in Paradise, that she would at least give me frequent indications of her presence;

<sup>57</sup> Shiraz was the home of the twelfth-century Persian poet, Saadi.

<sup>58</sup> An insect that lives but a day.

<sup>59</sup> Elysium.

sighing upon me in the evening winds, or filling the air which I breathed with perfume from the censers of the angels. And, with these words upon her lips, she yielded up her innocent life, putting an end to the first epoch of my own.

Thus far I have faithfully said. But as I pass the barrier in Time's path formed by the death of my beloved, and proceed with the second era of my existence, I feel that a shadow gathers over my brain, and I mistrust the perfect sanity of the record. But let me on.—Years dragged themselves along heavily, and still I dwelled within the Valley of the Many-Colored Grass; but a second change had come upon all things. The star-shaped flowers shrank into the stems of the trees, and appeared no more. The tints of the green carpet faded; and, one by one, the ruby-red asphodels withered away; and there sprang up in place of them, ten by ten, dark, eye-like violets, that writhed uneasily and were ever encumbered with dew. And Life departed from our paths; for the tall flamingo flaunted no longer his scarlet plumage before us, but flew sadly from the vale into the hills, with all the gay glowing birds that had arrived in his company. And the golden and silver fish swam down through the gorge at the lower end of our domain, and bedecked the sweet river never again. And the lulling melody that had been softer than the wind-harp of Æolus, and more divine than all save the voice of Eleonora, it died little by little away, in murmurs growing lower and lower, until the stream returned, at length, utterly into the solemnity of its original silence. And then, lastly, the voluminous cloud uprose, and, abandoning the tops of the mountains to the dimness of old, fell back into the regions of Hesper, and took away all its manifold golden and gorgeous glories from the Valley of the Many-Colored Grass.

Yet the promises of Eleonora were not forgotten; for I heard the sounds of the swinging of the censers of the angels; and streams of a holy perfume floated ever and ever about the valley; and at lone hours, when my heart beat heavily, the winds that bathed my brow came unto me laden with soft sighs; and indistinct murmurs filled often the night air; and once—oh, but once only! I was awakened from a slumber, like the slumber of death, by the pressing of spiritual lips upon my own.

But the void within my heart refused, even thus, to be filled. I longed for the love which had before

filled it to overflowing. At length the valley *pained* me through its memories of Eleonora, and I left it forever for the vanities and the turbulent triumphs of the world.

I found myself within a strange city, where all things might have served to blot from recollection the sweet dreams I had dreamed so long in the Valley of the Many-Colored Grass. The pomps and pageantries of a stately court, and the mad clangor of arms, and the radiant loveliness of woman, bewildered and intoxicated my brain. But as yet my soul had proved true to its vows, and the indications of the presence of Eleonora were still given me in the silent hours of the night. Suddenly these manifestations—they ceased; and the world grew dark before mine eyes; and I stood aghast at the burning thoughts which possessed, at the terrible temptations which beset, me; for there came from some far, far distant and unknown land, into the gay court of the king I <sup>20</sup> served, a maiden to whose beauty my whole recreant heart yielded at once—at whose footstool I bowed

down without a struggle, in the most ardent, in the most abject worship of love. What, indeed, was my passion for the young girl of the valley in comparison with the fervor, and the delirium, and the spirit-lifting ecstacy of adoration, with which I poured out my whole soul in tears at the feet of the ethereal Ermengarde? Oh, bright was the seraph Ermengarde! and in that knowledge I had room for none other. Oh, divine was the angel Ermengarde! and as I looked down into the depths of her memorial eyes, I thought only of them—and of *her*.

I wedded;—nor dreaded the curse I had invoked; and its bitterness was not visited upon me. And once—but once again in the silence of the night, there came through my lattice the soft sighs which had forsaken me; and they modeled themselves into familiar and sweet voice, saying:—

“Sleep in peace!—for the Spirit of Love reigneth and ruleth, and, in taking to thy passionate heart her who is Ermengarde, thou art absolved, for reasons which shall be made known to thee in Heaven, of thy vows unto Eleonora.”

1842

### *The Masque of the Red Death* <sup>60</sup>

The “Red Death” had long devastated the country. No pestilence had ever been so fatal, or so hideous. Blood was its Avatar <sup>61</sup> and its seal—the redness and the horror of blood. There were sharp pains, and sudden dizziness, and then profuse bleeding at the pores, with dissolution. The scarlet stains upon the body, and especially upon the face, of the victim were the pest ban which shut him out from the aid <sup>30</sup> and from the sympathy of his fellow-men. And the whole seizure, progress, and termination of the disease were the incidents of half an hour.

But the Prince Prospero was happy and dauntless and sagacious. When his dominions were half depopulated, he summoned to his presence a thousand hale and light-hearted friends from among the knights and dames of his court, and with these retired to the deep seclusion of one of his castellated abbeys. This was an extensive and magnificent structure, the crea- <sup>40</sup> tion of the Prince’s own eccentric yet august taste. A strong and lofty wall girdled it in. This wall had

gates of iron. The courtiers, having entered, brought furnaces and massy hammers, and welded the bolts. They resolved to leave means neither of ingress or egress to the sudden impulses of despair or of frenzy from within. The abbey was amply provisioned. With such precautions the courtiers might bid defiance to contagion. The external world could take care of itself. In the mean time it was folly to grieve, or to think. The Prince had provided all the appliances of pleasure. There were buffoons, there were improvisatori, <sup>62</sup> there were ballet-dancers, there were musicians, there was Beauty, there was wine. All these and security were within. Without was the “Red Death.”

It was toward the close of the fifth or sixth month of his seclusion, and while the pestilence raged most furiously abroad, that the Prince Prospero entertained his thousand friends at a masked ball of the most unusual magnificence.

It was a voluptuous scene, that masquerade. But first let me tell of the rooms in which it was held. There were seven—an imperial suite. In many places,

<sup>62</sup> Those who recite, compose, or sing extemporaneously.

<sup>60</sup> First published in *Graham’s Magazine*, May, 1842.

<sup>61</sup> Embodiment or symbol.

however, such suites form a long and straight vista, while the folding-doors slide back nearly to the walls on either hand, so that the view of the whole extent is scarcely impeded. Here the case was very different, as might have been expected from the Prince's love of the bizarre. The apartments were so irregularly disposed that the vision embraced but little more than one at a time. There was a sharp turn at every twenty or thirty yards, and at each turn a novel effect. To the right and left, in the middle of each wall, a tall and narrow Gothic window looked out upon a closed corridor which pursued the windings of the suite. These windows were of stained glass, whose color varied in accordance with the prevailing hue of the decorations of the chamber into which it opened. That at the eastern extremity was hung, for example, in blue—and vividly blue were its windows. The second chamber was purple in its ornaments and tapestries, and here the panes were purple. The third was green throughout, and so were the casements. The fourth was furnished and lighted with orange, the fifth with white, the sixth with violet. The seventh apartment was closely shrouded in black velvet tapestries that hung all over the ceiling and down the walls, falling in heavy folds upon a carpet of the same material and hue. But, in this chamber only, the color of the windows failed to correspond with the decorations. The panes here were scarlet—a deep blood-color. Now in no one of the seven apartments was there any lamp or candelabrum, amid the profusion of golden ornaments that lay scattered to and fro or depended from the roof. There was no light of any kind emanating from lamp or candle within the suite of chambers. But in the corridors that followed the suite there stood, opposite to each window, a heavy tripod, bearing a brazier of fire, that projected its rays through the tinted glass and so glaringly illumined the room. And thus were produced a multitude of gaudy and fantastic appearances. But in the western or black chamber the effect of the firelight that streamed upon the dark hangings through the blood-tinted panes was ghastly in the extreme, and produced so wild a look upon the countenances of those who entered that there were few of the company bold enough to set foot within its precincts at all.

It was in this apartment, also, that there stood against the western wall a gigantic clock of ebony. Its pendulum swung to and fro with a dull, heavy,

monotonous clang; and when the minute-hand made the circuit of the face, and the hour was to be stricken, there came from the brazen lungs of the clock a sound which was clear and loud and deep and exceedingly musical, but of so peculiar a note and emphasis that, at each lapse of an hour, the musicians of the orchestra were constrained to pause, momentarily, in their performance, to hearken to the sound; and thus the waltzers perforce ceased their evolutions; and there was a brief disconcert of the whole gay company; and, while the chimes of the clock yet rang, it was observed that the giddiest grew pale, and the more aged and sedate passed their hands over their brows as if in confused reverie or meditation. But when the echoes had fully ceased, a light laughter at once pervaded the assembly; the musicians looked at each other and smiled as if at their own nervousness and folly, and made whispering vows, each to the other, that the next chiming of the clock should produce in them no similar emotions; and then, after the lapse of sixty minutes (which embrace three thousand and six hundred seconds of the Time that flies) there came yet another chiming of the clock, and then were the same disconcert and tremulousness and meditation as before.

But, in spite of these things, it was a gay and magnificent revel. The tastes of the Prince were peculiar. He had a fine eye for colors and effects. He disregarded the *decora*<sup>63</sup> of mere fashion. His plans were bold and fiery, and his conceptions glowed with barbaric luster. There are some who would have thought him mad. His followers felt that he was not. It was necessary to hear and see and touch him to be *sure* that he was not.

He had directed, in great part, the movable embellishments of the seven chambers, upon occasion of this great *fête*; and it was his own guiding taste which had given character to the masqueraders. Be sure they were grotesque. There were much glare and glitter and piquancy and phantasm—much of what has been since seen in *Hernani*.<sup>64</sup> There were arabesque figures with unsuited limbs and appointments. There were delirious fancies such as the madman fashions. There was much of the beautiful, much of the wanton, much of the bizarre, some-

<sup>63</sup> Plural of *decorum*, meaning standards of fitness, propriety, etc.

<sup>64</sup> The famous tragedy produced in 1830 by Victor Hugo, usually regarded as the beginning in France of the nineteenth-century romantic drama.



thing of the terrible, and not a little of that which might have excited disgust. To and fro in the seven chambers there stalked, in fact, a multitude of dreams. And these—the dreams—writhe in and about, taking hue from the rooms, and causing the wild music of the orchestra to seem as the echo of their steps. And, anon, there strikes the ebony clock which stands in the hall of the velvet. And then, for a moment, all is still, and all is silent save the voice of the clock. The dreams are stiff-frozen as they stand. But the echoes of the chime die away—they have endured but an instant—and a light, half-subdued laughter floats after them as they depart. And now again the music swells, and the dreams live, and writhe to and fro more merrily than ever, taking hue from the many tinted windows through which stream the rays from the tripods. But to the chamber which lies most westwardly of the seven, there are now none of the maskers who venture; for the night is waning away, and there flows a ruddier light 20 through the blood-colored panes; and the blackness of the sable drapery appals; and to him whose foot falls upon the sable carpet, there comes from the near clock of ebony a muffled peal more solemnly emphatic than any which reaches *their* ears who indulge in the more remote gayeties of the other apartments.

But these other apartments were densely crowded, and in them beat feverishly the heart of life. And the revel went whirlingly on, until at length there 30 commenced the sounding of midnight upon the clock. And then the music ceased, as I have told; and the evolutions of the waltzes were quieted; and there was an uneasy cessation of all things as before. But now there were twelve strokes to be sounded by the bell of the clock; and thus it happened, perhaps, that more of thought crept, with more of time, into the meditations of the thoughtful among those who reveled. And thus, too, it happened, perhaps, that before the last echoes of the last chime had utterly 40 sunk into silence, there were many individuals in the crowd who had found leisure to become aware of the presence of a masked figure which had arrested the attention of no single individual before. And the rumor of this new presence having spread itself whisperingly around, there arose at length from the whole company a buzz, or murmur, expressive of disapprobation and surprise—then, finally, of terror, of horror, and of disgust.

In an assembly of phantasms such as I have painted, it may well be supposed that no ordinary appearance could have excited such sensation. In truth the masquerade license of the night was nearly unlimited; but the figure in question had out-Heroded Herod,<sup>65</sup> and gone beyond the bounds of even the Prince's indefinite decorum. There are chords in the hearts of the most reckless which cannot be touched without emotion. Even with the utterly lost, to whom life and death are equally jests, there are matters of which no jest can be made. The whole company, indeed, seemed now deeply to feel that in the costume and bearing of the stranger neither wit nor propriety existed. The figure was tall and gaunt, and shrouded from head to foot in the habiliments of the grave. The mask which concealed the visage was made so nearly to resemble the countenance of a stiffened corpse that the closest scrutiny must have had difficulty in detecting the cheat. And yet all this might have been endured, if not approved, by the mad revelers around. But the mummer had gone so far as to assume the type of the Red Death. His vesture was dabbled in *blood*—and his broad brow, with all the features of the face, was besprinkled with the scarlet horror.

When the eyes of Prince Prospero fell upon this spectral image (which with a slow and solemn movement, as if more fully to sustain its *rôle*, stalked to and fro among the waltzers) he was seen to be convulsed, in the first moment, with a strong shudder either of terror or distaste; but, in the next, his brow reddened with rage.

"Who dares?" he demanded hoarsely of the courtiers who stood near him—"who dares insult us with this blasphemous mockery? Seize him and unmask him—that we may know whom we have to hang at sunrise, from the battlements!"

It was in the eastern or blue chamber in which stood the Prince Prospero as he uttered these words. They rang throughout the seven rooms loudly and clearly—for the Prince was a bold and robust man, and the music had become hushed at the waving of his hand.

It was in the blue room where stood the Prince, with a group of pale courtiers by his side. At first, as he spoke, there was a slight rushing movement of this group in the direction of the intruder, who at the mo-

<sup>65</sup> An expression used by Hamlet in his first paragraph of instruction to the players (*Hamlet*, III, ii, 16).

ment was also near at hand, and now, with deliberate and stately step, made closer approach to the speaker. But from a certain nameless awe with which the mad assumptions of the mummer had inspired the whole party, there were found none who put forth hand to seize him; so that, unimpeded, he passed within a yard of the Prince's person; and while the vast assembly, as if with one impulse, shrank from the centers of the rooms to the walls, he made his way uninterruptedly, but with the same solemn and measured step which had distinguished him from the first, through the blue chamber to the purple—through the purple to the green—through the green to the orange—through this again to the white—and even thence to the violet, ere a decided movement had been made to arrest him. It was then, however, that the Prince Prospero, maddening with rage and the shame of his own momentary cowardice, rushed hurriedly through the six chambers, while none followed him, on account of a deadly terror that had seized upon all. He bore aloft a drawn dagger, and had approached, in rapid impetuosity, to within three or four feet of the retreating figure, when the latter,

having attained the extremity of the velvet apartment, turned suddenly and confronted his pursuer. There was a sharp cry—and the dagger dropped gleaming upon the sable carpet, upon which, instantly afterwards, fell prostrate in death the Prince Prospero. Then, summoning the wild courage of despair, a throng of the revelers at once threw themselves into the black apartment, and, seizing the mummer, whose tall figure stood erect and motionless within the shadow of the ebony clock, gasped in unutterable horror at finding the grave ceremonies and corpse-like mask, which they handled with so violent a rudeness, untenanted by any tangible form.

And now was acknowledged the presence of the Red Death. He had come like a thief in the night. And one by one dropped the revelers in the blood-bedewed halls of their revel, and died each in the despairing posture of his fall. And the life of the ebony clock went out with that of the last of the gay. And the flames of the tripods expired. And Darkness and Decay and the Red Death held illimitable dominion over all.

1842

### *The Tell-Tale Heart* <sup>66</sup>

True!—nervous—very, very dreadfully nervous I had been and am; but why *will* you say that I am mad? The disease had sharpened my senses—not destroyed—not dulled them. Above all was the sense of hearing acute. I heard all things in the heaven and in the earth. I heard many things in hell. How, then, am I mad? Hearken! and observe how healthy—how

calmly I can tell the whole story. It is impossible to say how first the idea entered my brain; but once conceived, it haunted me day and night. Object there was none. Passion there was none. I loved the old man. He had never wronged me. He had never given me insult. For his gold I had no desire. I think it was his eye! yes, it was this! He had the eye of a vulture—a pale blue eye, with a film over it. Whenever it fell upon me, my blood ran cold; and so by degrees—very gradually—I made up

my mind to take the life of the old man, and thus rid myself of the eye for ever.

Now this is the point. You fancy me mad. Madmen know nothing. But you should have seen *me*.

You should have seen how wisely I proceeded—with what caution—with what foresight—with what dissimulation I went to work! I was never kinder to the old man than during the whole week before I killed him. And every night, about midnight, I turned the latch of his door and opened it—oh so gently! And then, when I had made an opening sufficient for my head, I put in a dark lantern, all closed, closed, so that no light shone out, and then I thrust in my head. Oh, you would have laughed to see how cunningly I thrust it in! I moved it slowly—very, very slowly, so that I might not disturb the old man's sleep. It took me an hour to place my whole head within the opening so far that I could see him as he lay upon his bed. Ha!—would a madman have been so wise as this? And then, when my head was well in the room, I undid the lantern cautiously—oh, so cautiously—cautiously (for the hinges creaked)—I undid it just so much that a single thin ray fell upon the vulture eye. And this I did for seven long nights—every night just at midnight—but I found the eye always closed; and so it was impossible to do the

<sup>66</sup> Published in *The Pioneer*, January, 1843.

work; for it was not the old man who vexed me, but his Evil Eye. And every morning, when the day broke, I went boldly into the chamber, and spoke courageously to him, calling him by name in a hearty tone, and inquiring how he had passed the night. So you see he would have been a very profound old man, indeed, to suspect that every night, just at twelve, I looked in upon him while he slept.

Upon the eighth night I was more than usually cautious in opening the door. A watch's minute hand <sup>10</sup> moves more quickly than did mine. Never before that night, had I *felt* the extent of my own powers—of my sagacity. I could scarcely contain my feelings of triumph. To think that there I was, opening the door, little by little, and he not even to dream of my secret deeds or thoughts. I fairly chuckled at the idea; and perhaps he heard me; for he moved on the bed suddenly, as if startled. Now you may think that I drew back—but no. His room was as black as pitch with the thick darkness (for the shutters were close <sup>20</sup> fastened, through fear of robbers), and so I knew that he could not see the opening of the door, and I kept pushing it on steadily, steadily.

I had my head in, and was about to open the lantern, when my thumb slipped upon the tin fastening, and the old man sprang up in bed, crying out—"Who's there?"

I kept quite still and said nothing. For a whole hour I did not move a muscle, and in the meantime I did not hear him lie down. He was still sitting up <sup>30</sup> in the bed, listening;—just as I have done, night after night, hearkening to the death watches in the wall.

Presently I heard a slight groan, and I knew it was the groan of mortal terror. It was not a groan of pain or of grief—oh, no!—it was the low stifled sound that arises from the bottom of the soul when overcharged with awe. I knew the sound well. Many a night, just at midnight, when all the world slept, it has welled up from my own bosom, deepening, with its dreadful <sup>40</sup> echo, the terrors that distracted me. I say I knew it well. I knew what the old man felt, and pitied him, although I chuckled at heart. I knew that he had been lying awake ever since the first slight noise, when he had turned in the bed. His fears had been ever since growing upon him. He had been trying to fancy them causeless, but could not. He had been saying to himself—"It is nothing but the wind in the chimney—it is only a mouse crossing the floor," or "it is merely a cricket which has made a single chirp."

Yes, he had been trying to comfort himself with these suppositions: but he had found all in vain. *All in vain*; because Death, in approaching him, had stalked with his black shadow before him, and enveloped the victim. And it was the mournful influence of the unperceived shadow that caused him to feel—although he neither saw nor heard—to *feel* the presence of my head within the room.

When I had waited a long time, very patiently, without hearing him lie down, I resolved to open a little—a very, very little crevice in the lantern. So I opened it—you cannot imagine how stealthily, stealthily—until, at length, a single dim ray, like the thread of the spider, shot from out the crevice and fell full upon the vulture eye.

It was open—wide, wide open—and I grew furious as I gazed upon it. I saw it with perfect distinctness—all a dull blue, with a hideous veil over it that chilled the very marrow in my bones; but I could see nothing else of the old man's face or person: for I had directed the ray as if by instinct, precisely upon the damned spot.

And now have I not told you that what you mistake for madness is but over acuteness of the senses?—now, I say, there came to my ears a low, dull, quick sound, such as a watch makes when enveloped in cotton. I knew *that* sound well, too. It was the beating of the old man's heart. It increased my fury, as the beating of a drum stimulates the soldier into courage.

But even yet I refrained and kept still. I scarcely breathed. I held the lantern motionless. I tried how steadily I could maintain the ray upon the eye. Meantime the hellish tattoo of the heart increased. It grew quicker and quicker, and louder and louder every instant. The old man's terror *must* have been extreme! It grew louder, I say, louder every moment!—do you mark me well? I have told you that I am nervous: so I am. And now at the dead hour of the night, amid the dreadful silence of that old house, so strange a noise as this excited me to uncontrollable terror. Yet, for some minutes longer I refrained and stood still. But the beatings grew louder, louder! I thought the heart must burst. And now a new anxiety seized me—the sound would be heard by a neighbor! The old man's hour had come! With a loud yell, I threw open the lantern and leaped into the room. He shrieked once—once only. In an instant I dragged him to the floor, and pulled the

heavy bed over him. I then smiled gaily, to find the deed so far done. But, for many minutes, the heart beat on with a muffled sound. This, however, did not vex me; it would not be heard through the wall. At length it ceased. The old man was dead. I removed the bed and examined the corpse. Yes, he was stone, stone dead. I placed my hand upon the heart and held it there many minutes. There was no pulsation. He was stone dead. His eye would trouble me no more.

If still you think me mad, you will think so no longer when I describe the wise precautions I took for the concealment of the body. The night waned, and I worked hastily, but in silence. First of all I dismembered the corpse. I cut off the head and the arms and the legs.

I then took up three planks from the flooring of the chamber, and deposited all between the scantlings. I then replaced the boards so cleverly, so cunningly, that no human eye—not even *his*—could have detected any thing wrong. There was nothing to wash out—no stain of any kind—no blood-spot whatever. I had been too wary for that. A tub had caught all—ha! ha!

When I had made an end of these labors, it was four o'clock—still dark as midnight. As the bell sounded the hour, there came a knocking at the street door. I went down to open it with a light heart,—for what had I *now* to fear? There entered three men, who introduced themselves, with perfect suavity, as officers of the police. A shriek had been heard by a neighbor during the night; suspicion of foul play had been aroused; information had been lodged at the police office, and they (the officers) had been deputed to search the premises.

I smiled,—for *what* had I to fear? I bade the gentlemen welcome. The shriek, I said, was my own in a dream. The old man, I mentioned, was absent in the country. I took my visitors all over the house. I bade them search—search *well*. I led them, at length, to *his* chamber. I showed them his treasures, secure, undisturbed. In the enthusiasm of my confidence, I brought chairs into the room, and desired them *here* to rest from their fatigues, while I my-

self, in the wild audacity of my perfect triumph, placed my own seat upon the very spot beneath which reposed the corpse of the victim.

The officers were satisfied. My *manner* had convinced them. I was singularly at ease. They sat, and while I answered cheerily, they chatted of familiar things. But, ere long, I felt myself getting pale and wished them gone. My head ached, and I fancied a ringing in my ears: but still they sat and still chatted. 10 The ringing became more distinct:—it continued and became more distinct: I talked more freely to get rid of the feeling: but it continued and gained definiteness—until, at length, I found that the noise was *not* within my ears.

No doubt I now grew *very* pale;—but I talked more fluently, and with a heightened voice. Yet the sound increased—and what could I do? It was a *low, dull, quick sound—much such a sound as a watch makes when enveloped in cotton*. I gasped for breath—and yet the officers heard it not. I talked more quickly—more vehemently; but the noise steadily increased. I arose and argued about trifles, in a high key and with violent gesticulations; but the noise steadily increased. Why *would* they not be gone? I paced the floor to and fro with heavy strides, as if excited to fury by the observations of the men—but the noise steadily increased. Oh, God! what *could* I do? I foamed—I raved—I swore! I swung the chair upon which I had been sitting, and grated it upon the boards, but the noise arose over all and continually increased. It grew louder—louder—*louder!* And still the men chatted pleasantly and smiled. Was it possible they heard not? Almighty God!—no, no! They heard!—they suspected!—they *knew!*—they were making a mockery of my horror!—this I thought, and this I think. But anything was better than this agony! Anything was more tolerable than this derision! I could bear those hypocritical smiles no longer! I felt that I must scream or die!—and now—again!—hark! louder! louder! louder! *louder!*—

“Villains!” I shrieked, “dissemble no more! I admit the deed!—tear up the planks!—here, here!—it is the beating of his hideous heart!”

*The Purloined Letter*<sup>67</sup>

*Nil sapientiae odiosius acumine nimio.*<sup>68</sup> SENECA.

At Paris, just after dark one gusty evening in the autumn of 18—, I was enjoying the twofold luxury of meditation and a meerschaum, in company with my friend, C. Auguste Dupin, in his little back library, or book closet, *au troisième*,<sup>69</sup> No. 33 Rue Dunôt, Faubourg St. Germain. For one hour at least we had maintained a profound silence; while each, to any casual observer, might have seemed intently and exclusively occupied with the curling eddies of smoke that oppressed the atmosphere of the chamber. For myself, however, I was mentally discussing certain topics which had formed matter for conversation between us at an earlier period of the evening; I mean the affair of the Rue Morgue, and the mystery attending the murder of Marie Rogêt. I looked upon it, therefore, as something of a coincidence, when the door of our apartment was thrown open and admitted our old acquaintance, Monsieur G—, the Prefect of the Parisian police.

We gave him a hearty welcome; for there was nearly half as much of the entertaining as of the contemptible about the man, and we had not seen him for several years. We had been sitting in the dark, and Dupin now arose for the purpose of lighting a lamp, but sat down again, without doing so, upon G—'s saying that he had called to consult us, or rather to ask the opinion of my friend, about some official business which had occasioned a great deal of trouble.

"If it is any point requiring reflection," observed Dupin, as he forbore to enkindle the wick, "we shall examine it to better purpose in the dark."

"That is another of your odd notions," said the Prefect, who had a fashion of calling everything "odd" that was beyond his comprehension, and thus lived amid an absolute legion of "oddities."

"Very true," said Dupin, as he supplied his visitor with a pipe, and rolled towards him a comfortable 40 chair.

<sup>67</sup> Like "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" and "The Gold Bug," this tale, first published in *The Gift* for 1845, illustrates Poe's ratiocinative story.

<sup>68</sup> "Nothing more hateful to wisdom than overcleverness."

<sup>69</sup> On the third floor, *i.e.*, the third floor above the ground floor.

"And what is the difficulty now?" I asked. "Nothing more in the assassination way, I hope?"

"Oh, no; nothing of that nature. The fact is, the business is very simple indeed, and I make no doubt that we can manage it sufficiently well ourselves; but then I thought Dupin would like to hear the details of it, because it is so excessively *odd*."

"Simple and odd," said Dupin.

"Why, yes; and not exactly that, either. The fact is, we have all been a good deal puzzled because the affair is so simple, and yet baffles us altogether."

"Perhaps it is the very simplicity of the thing which puts you at fault," said my friend.

"What nonsense you do talk!" replied the Prefect, laughing heartily.

"Perhaps the mystery is a little *too* plain," said Dupin.

"Oh, good heavens! who ever heard of such an idea?"

"A little *too* self evident."

"Ha! ha! ha!—ha! ha! ha!—ho! ho! ho!" roared our visitor, profoundly amused, "oh, Dupin, you will be the death of me yet!"

"And what, after all, is the matter on hand?" I asked.

"Why, I will tell you," replied the Prefect, as he gave a long, steady, and contemplative puff, and settled himself in his chair. "I will tell you in a few words; but, before I begin, let me caution you that this is an affair demanding the greatest secrecy, and that I should most probably lose the position I now hold were it known that I confided it to any one."

"Proceed," said I.

"Or not," said Dupin.

"Well, then; I have received personal information from a very high quarter that a certain document of the last importance has been purloined from the royal apartments. The individual who purloined it is known; this beyond a doubt; he was seen to take it. It is known, also, that it still remains in his possession."

"How is this known?" asked Dupin.

"It is clearly inferred," replied the Prefect, "from the nature of the document, and from the non-appearance of certain results which would at once arise

from its passing out of the robber's possession; that is to say, from his employing it as he must design in the end to employ it."

"Be a little more explicit," I said.

"Well, I may venture so far as to say that the paper gives its holder a certain power in a certain quarter where such power is immensely valuable." The Prefect was fond of the cant of diplomacy.

"Still I do not quite understand," said Dupin.

"No? Well; the disclosure of the document to a third person, who shall be nameless, would bring in question the honor of a personage of most exalted station; and this fact gives the holder of the document an ascendancy over the illustrious personage whose honor and peace are so jeopardized."

"But this ascendancy," I interposed, "would depend upon the robber's knowledge of the loser's knowledge of the robber. Who would dare?"

"The thief," said G——, "is the Minister D——, who dares all things, those unbecoming as well as those becoming a man. The method of the theft was not less ingenious than bold. The document in question—a letter, to be frank—had been received by the personage robbed while alone in the royal *boudoir*. During its perusal she was suddenly interrupted by the entrance of the other exalted personage, from whom especially it was her wish to conceal it. After a hurried and vain endeavor to thrust it in a drawer, she was forced to place it, open as it was, upon a table. The address, however, was uppermost, and, the contents thus unexposed, the letter escaped notice. At this juncture enters the Minister D——. His lynx eye immediately perceives the paper, recognizes the handwriting of the address, observes the confusion of the personage addressed, and fathoms her secret. After some business transactions, hurried through in his ordinary manner, he produces a letter somewhat similar to the one in question, opens it, pretends to read it, and then places it in close juxtaposition to the other. Again he converses for some fifteen minutes upon the public affairs. At length in taking leave he takes also from the table the letter to which he had no claim. Its rightful owner saw, but of course dared not call attention to the act, in the presence of the third personage, who stood at her elbow. The Minister decamped, leaving his own letter—one of no importance—upon the table."

"Here, then," said Dupin to me, "you have precisely what you demand to make the ascendancy com-

plete—the robber's knowledge of the loser's knowledge of the robber."

"Yes," replied the Prefect; "and the power thus attained has, for some months past, been wielded, for political purposes, to a very dangerous extent. The personage robbed is more thoroughly convinced, every day, of the necessity of reclaiming her letter. But this, of course, cannot be done openly. In fine, driven to despair, she has committed the matter to me."

"Than whom," said Dupin, amid a perfect whirlwind of smoke, "no more sagacious agent could, I suppose, be desired, or even imagined."

"You flatter me," replied the Prefect; "but it is possible that some such opinion may have been entertained."

"It is clear," said I, "as you observe, that the letter is still in possession of the Minister; since it is this possession, and not any employment of the letter, which bestows the power. With the employment the power departs."

"True," said G——; "and upon this conviction I proceeded. My first care was to make thorough search of the Minister's Hotel; and here my chief embarrassment lay in the necessity of searching without his knowledge. Beyond all things, I have been warned of the danger which would result from giving him reason to suspect our design."

"But," said I, "you are quite *au fait*<sup>70</sup> in these investigations. The Parisian police have done this thing often before."

"Oh, yes; and for this reason I did not despair. The habits of the Minister gave me, too, a great advantage. He is frequently absent from home all night. His servants are by no means numerous. They sleep at a distance from their master's apartment, and, being chiefly Neapolitans, are readily made drunk. I have keys, as you know, with which I can open any chamber or cabinet in Paris. For three months a night has not passed, during the greater part of which I have not been engaged, personally, in ransacking the D—— Hotel. My honor is interested, and, to mention a great secret, the reward is enormous. So I did not abandon the search until I had become fully satisfied that the thief is a more astute man than myself. I fancy that I have investigated every nook and corner of the premises in which it is possible that the paper can be concealed."

"But is it not possible," I suggested, "that although

<sup>70</sup> Expert, accomplished, knowing.

the letter may be in possession of the Minister, as it unquestionably is, he may have concealed it elsewhere than upon his own premises?"

"This is barely possible," said Dupin. "The present peculiar condition of affairs at court, and especially of those intrigues in which D—— is known to be involved, would render the instant availability of the document—its susceptibility of being produced at a moment's notice—a point of nearly equal importance with its possession."

"Its susceptibility of being produced?" said I.

"That is to say, of being *destroyed*," said Dupin.

"True," I observed; "the paper is clearly then upon the premises. As for its being upon the person of the Minister, we may consider that as out of the question."

"Entirely," said the Prefect. "He has been twice waylaid, as if by footpads, and his person rigorously searched under my own inspection."

"You might have spared yourself this trouble," said Dupin. "D——, I presume, is not altogether a fool, and, if not, must have anticipated these waylayings as a matter of course."

"Not *altogether* a fool," said G——, "but then he's a poet, which I take to be only one remove from a fool."

"True," said Dupin, after a long and thoughtful whiff from his meerschaum, "although I have been guilty of certain doggerel myself."

"Suppose you detail," said I, "the particulars of your search."

"Why, the fact is, we took our time, and we searched *everywhere*. I have had long experience in these affairs. I took the entire building, room by room, devoting the nights of a whole week to each. We examined, first, the furniture of each apartment. We opened every possible drawer; and I presume you know that, to a properly trained police agent, such a thing as a *secret* drawer is impossible. Any man is a dolt who permits a 'secret' drawer to escape him in a search of this kind. The thing is so plain. There is a certain amount of bulk—of space—to be accounted for in every cabinet. Then we have accurate rules. The fiftieth part of a line could not escape us. After the cabinets we took the chairs. The cushions we probed with the fine long needles you have seen me employ. From the tables we removed the tops."

"Why so?"

"Sometimes the top of a table, or other similarly arranged piece of furniture, is removed by the person

wishing to conceal an article; then the leg is excavated, the article deposited within the cavity, and the top replaced. The bottoms and tops of bedposts are employed in the same way."

"But could not the cavity be detected by sounding?" I asked.

"By no means, if, when the article is deposited, a sufficient wadding of cotton be placed around it. Besides, in our case we were obliged to proceed with-  
out noise."

"But you could not have removed—you could not have taken to pieces *all* articles of furniture in which it could have been possible to make a deposit in the manner you mention. A letter may be compressed into a thin spiral roll, not differing much in shape or bulk from a large knitting-needle, and in this form it might be inserted into the rung of a chair, for example. You did not take to pieces all the chairs?"

"Certainly not; but we did better—we examined the rungs of every chair in the Hotel, and indeed, the jointings of every description of furniture, by the aid of a most powerful microscope. Had there been any traces of recent disturbance we should not have failed to detect it instantly. A single grain of gimlet-dust, for example, would have been as obvious as an apple. Any disorder in the gluing—any unusual gaping in the joints—would have sufficed to insure detection."

"I presume you looked to the mirrors, between the boards and the plates, and you probed the beds and bedclothes, as well as the curtains and carpets?"

"That, of course; and when we had absolutely completed every particle of the furniture in this way, then we examined the house itself. We divided its entire surface into compartments, which we numbered, so that none might be missed; then we scrutinized each individual square inch throughout the premises, including the two houses immediately adjoining, with the microscope, as before."

"The two houses adjoining!" I exclaimed; "you must have had a great deal of trouble."

"We had; but the reward offered is prodigious."

"You include the *grounds* about the houses?"

"All the grounds are paved with brick. They gave us comparatively little trouble. We examined the moss between the bricks, and found it undisturbed."

"You looked among D——'s papers, of course, and into the books of the library?"

"Certainly; we opened every package and parcel; we not only opened every book, but we turned over

every leaf in each volume, not contenting ourselves with a mere shake, according to the fashion of some of our police officers. We also measured the thickness of every book-cover, with the most accurate ad-measurement, and applied to each the most jealous scrutiny of the microscope. Had any of the bindings been recently meddled with, it would have been utterly impossible that the fact should have escaped observation. Some five or six volumes, just from the hands of the binder, we carefully probed, longitudinally, with the needles."

"You explored the floors beneath the carpets?"

"Beyond doubt. We removed every carpet, and examined the boards with the microscope."

"And the paper on the walls?"

"Yes."

"You looked into the cellars?"

"We did."

"Then," I said, "you have been making a miscalculation, and the letter is *not* upon the premises, as you suppose."

"I fear you are right there," said the Prefect. "And now, Dupin, what would you advise me to do?"

"To make a thorough re-search of the premises."

"That is absolutely needless," replied G—. "I am not more sure that I breathe than I am that the letter is not at the Hotel."

"I have no better advice to give you," said Dupin. "You have, of course, an accurate description of the letter?"

"Oh, yes!"—And here the Prefect, producing a memorandum-book, proceeded to read aloud a minute account of the internal and especially of the external appearance of the missing document. Soon after finishing the perusal of this description, he took his departure, more entirely depressed in spirits than I had ever known the good gentleman before.

In about a month afterwards he paid us another visit, and found us occupied very nearly as before. He took a pipe and a chair, and entered into some ordinary conversation. At length I said,—

"Well, but G—, what of the purloined letter? I presume you have at last made up your mind that there is no such thing as overreaching the Minister?"

"Confound him, say I—yes; I made the re-examination, however, as Dupin suggested—but it was all labor lost, as I knew it would be."

"How much was the reward offered, did you say?" asked Dupin.

"Why, a very great deal—a very liberal reward—

I don't like to say how much precisely; but one thing I *will* say, that I wouldn't mind giving my individual check for fifty thousand francs to any one who could obtain me that letter. The fact is, it is becoming of more and more importance every day; and the reward has been lately doubled. If it were trebled, however, I could do no more than I have done."

"Why, yes," said Dupin, drawlingly, between the whiffs of his meerschaum, "I really—think, G—, you have not exerted yourself—to the utmost in this matter. You might—do a little more, I think, eh?"

"How?—in what way?"

"Why—puff, puff—you might—puff, puff—employ counsel in the matter, eh?—puff, puff, puff—Do you remember the story they tell of Abernethy?"<sup>71</sup>

"No; hang Abernethy!"

"To be sure! hang him and welcome. But, once upon a time, a certain rich miser conceived the design of sponging upon this Abernethy for a medical opinion. Getting up, for this purpose, an ordinary conversation in a private company, he insinuated his case to the physician, as that of an imaginary individual.

"'We will suppose,' said the miser, 'that his symptoms are such and such; now, doctor, what would you have directed him to take?'"

"'Take!' said Abernethy, 'why, take *advice*, to be sure.'"

30 "But," said the Prefect, a little discomposed, "I am *perfectly* willing to take advice, and to pay for it. I would *really* give fifty thousand francs to any one who would aid me in the matter."

"In that case," replied Dupin, opening a drawer, and producing a checkbook, "you may as well fill me up a check for the amount mentioned. When you have signed it, I will hand you the letter."

I was astounded. The Prefect appeared absolutely thunderstricken. For some minutes he remained speechless and motionless, looking incredulously at my friend with open mouth, and eyes that seemed starting from their sockets; then, apparently recovering himself in some measure, he seized a pen, and after several pauses and vacant stares, finally filled up and signed a check for fifty thousand francs, and handed it across the table to Dupin. The latter examined it carefully and deposited it in his pocket-book; then, unlocking an *escritoire*,<sup>72</sup> took thence a

<sup>71</sup> Dr. John Abernethy (1764–1831), British medical authority.

<sup>72</sup> Writing desk.



letter and gave it to the Prefect. This functionary grasped it in a perfect agony of joy, opened it with a trembling hand, cast a rapid glance at its contents, and then, scrambling and struggling to the door, rushed at length unceremoniously from the room and from the house, without having uttered a syllable since Dupin had requested him to fill up the check.

When he had gone, my friend entered into some explanations.

"The Parisian police," he said, "are exceedingly able in their way. They are persevering, ingenious, cunning, and thoroughly versed in the knowledge which their duties seem chiefly to demand. Thus, when G—— detailed to us his mode of searching the premises at the Hotel D——, I felt entire confidence in his having made a satisfactory investigation—so far as his labors extended."

"So far as his labors extended?" said I.

"Yes," said Dupin. "The measures adopted were not only the best of their kind, but carried out to absolute perfection. Had the letter been deposited within the range of their search, these fellows would, beyond a question, have found it."

I merely laughed—but he seemed quite serious in all that he said.

"The measures, then," he continued, "were good in their kind, and well executed; their defect lay in their being inapplicable to the case, and to the man. A certain set of highly ingenious resources are, with the Prefect, a sort of Procrustean bed<sup>73</sup> to which he forcibly adapts his designs. But he perpetually errs by being too deep or too shallow, for the matter in hand; and many a schoolboy is a better reasoner than he. I knew one about eight years of age, whose success at guessing in the game of 'even and odd' attracted universal admiration. This game is simple, and is played with marbles. One player holds in his hand a number of these toys, and demands of another whether that number is even or odd. If the guess is right, the guesser wins one; if wrong, he loses one. The boy to whom I allude won all the marbles of the school. Of course he had some principle of guessing; and this lay in mere observation and admeasurement of the astuteness of his opponents. For example, an arrant simpleton is his opponent, and, holding up his closed hand, asks, 'Are they even or odd?' Our schoolboy replies, 'Odd,' and loses; but

upon the second trial he wins, for he then says to himself, 'The simpleton had them even upon the first trial, and his amount of cunning is just sufficient to make him have them odd upon the second; I will therefore guess odd'; he guesses odd, and wins. Now, with a simpleton a degree above the first he would have reasoned thus: 'This fellow finds that in the first instance I guessed odd, and in the second he will propose to himself, upon the first impulse, a simple variation from even to odd, as did the first simpleton; but then a second thought will suggest that this is too simple a variation, and finally he will decide upon putting it even as before. I will therefore guess even'; he guesses even, and wins. Now, this mode of reasoning in the schoolboy, whom his fellows termed 'lucky'—what, in its last analysis, is it?"

"It is merely," I said, "an identification of the reasoner's intellect with that of his opponent."

"It is," said Dupin; "and, upon inquiring of the boy by what means he effected the *thorough* identification in which his success consisted, I received answer as follows: 'When I wish to find out how wise, or how stupid, or how good, or how wicked is any one, or what are his thoughts at the moment, I fashion the expression of my face, as accurately as possible, in accordance with the expression of his, and then wait to see what thoughts or sentiments arise in my mind or heart, as if to match or correspond with the expression.' This response of the schoolboy lies at the bottom of all the spurious profundity which has been attributed to Rochefoucauld,<sup>74</sup> to La Bruyère,<sup>75</sup> to Machiavelli,<sup>76</sup> and to Campanella."<sup>77</sup>

"And the identification," I said, "of the reasoner's intellect with that of his opponent, depends, if I understand you aright, upon the accuracy with which the opponent's intellect is admeasured."

"For its practical value it depends upon this," replied Dupin, "and the Prefect and his cohort fail so frequently, first, by default of this identification, and secondly, by ill-admeasurement, or rather through nonadmeasurement, of the intellect with which they are engaged. They consider only their own ideas of ingenuity; and, in searching for anything hidden, advert only to the modes in which *they* would have

<sup>74</sup> François de la Rochefoucauld (1613–80).

<sup>75</sup> Jean de La Bruyère (1645–96), French author.

<sup>76</sup> Niccolò Machiavelli (1469–1527), Florentine statesman and political writer.

<sup>77</sup> Tommaso Campanella (1568–1639), Italian philosopher.

<sup>73</sup> The famous bed to which the legendary Greek robber, Procrustes, made his victims fit, by stretching them if too short, and by cutting off portions of their limbs if they were too long.

hidden it. They are right in this much—that their own ingenuity is a faithful representative of that of *the mass*: but when the cunning of the individual felon is diverse in character from their own, the felon foils them, of course. This always happens when it is above their own, and very usually when it is below. They have no variation of principle in their investigations; at best, when urged by some unusual emergency—by some extraordinary reward—they extend or exaggerate their old modes of *practice*,<sup>10</sup> without touching their principles. What, for example, in this case of D—, has been done to vary the principle of action? What is all this boring, and probing, and sounding, and scrutinizing with the microscope, and dividing the surface of the building into registered square inches—what is it all but an exaggeration of the *application* of the one principle or set of principles of search, which are based upon the one set of notions regarding human ingenuity, to which the Prefect, in the long routine of his duty,<sup>20</sup> has been accustomed? Do you not see he has taken it for granted that *all* men proceed to conceal a letter,—not exactly in a gimlet hole bored in a chair-leg—but, at least, in *some* out-of-the-way hole or corner suggested by the same tenor of thought which would urge a man to secrete a letter in a gimlet-hole bored in a chair leg? And do you not see, also, that such *recherchés*<sup>78</sup> nooks for concealment are adapted only for ordinary occasions and would be adopted only by ordinary intellects; for, in all cases<sup>30</sup> of concealment, a disposal of the article concealed—a disposal of it in this *recherché* manner—is, in the very first instance, presumable and presumed; and thus its discovery depends, not at all upon the acumen, but altogether upon the mere care, patience, and determination of the seekers; and where the case is of importance—or, what amounts to the same thing in the policial eyes, when the reward is of magnitude—the qualities in question have *never* been known to fail. You will now understand what<sup>40</sup> I meant in suggesting that, had the purloined letter been hidden anywhere within the limits of the Prefect's examination—in other words, had the principle of its concealment been comprehended within the principles of the Prefect—its discovery would have been a matter altogether beyond question. This functionary, however, has been thoroughly mystified; and the remote source of his defeat lies in the supposition that the Minister is a fool because he has

<sup>78</sup> Hidden, to be sought out with care.

acquired renown as a poet. All fools are poets; this the Prefect *feels*; and he is merely guilty of a *non distributio medii*<sup>79</sup> in thence inferring that all poets are fools."

"But is this really the poet?" I asked. "There are two brothers, I know; and both have attained reputation in letters. The Minister, I believe, has written learnedly on the Differential Calculus. He is a mathematician and no poet."

"You are mistaken; I know him well; he is both. As poet *and* mathematician he would reason well; as mere mathematician he could not have reasoned at all, and thus would have been at the mercy of the Prefect."

"You surprise me," I said, "by these opinions, which have been contradicted by the voice of the world. You do not mean to set at naught the well-digested idea of centuries. The mathematical reason has long been regarded as *the reason par excellence*."

"*Il y a à parier*," replied Dupin, quoting from Chamfort, "*que toute idée publique, toute convention reçue, est une sottise, car elle a convenu au plus grand nombre*."<sup>80</sup> The mathematicians, I grant you, have done their best to promulgate the popular error to which you allude, and which is none the less an error for its promulgation as truth. With an art worthy a better cause, for example, they have insinuated the term 'analysis' into application to algebra. The French are the originators of this particular de-  
ception; but if a term is of any importance—if words derive any value from applicability—then 'analysis' conveys 'algebra,' about as much as, in Latin, '*ambitus*' implies 'ambition,' '*religio*,' 'religion,' or '*homines honesti*,' a sort of honorable men."<sup>81</sup>

"You have a quarrel on hand, I see," said I, "with some of the algebraists of Paris; but proceed."

"I dispute the availability, and thus the value of the reason which is cultivated in any especial form other than the abstractly logical. I dispute, in particular, the reason educed by mathematical study. The mathematics are the science of form and quantity; mathematical reasoning is merely logic applied to observation upon form and quantity. The great error lies in supposing that even the truths of what

<sup>79</sup> A term used in logic to mean an undistributed middle of a syllogism, thus leading to a wrong conclusion.

<sup>80</sup> "It is safe to bet that every common notion, every received convention, is nonsense, since it has found favor with the majority," Sebastien Roch Nicolas Chamfort (1741-94), a wit and moralist, famous for his *Maximes et Pensées*.

<sup>81</sup> The general point of this discussion is that the derivatives of a word do not necessarily include its original meaning.

is called *pure* algebra are abstract or general truths. And this error is so egregious that I am confounded at the universality with which it has been received. Mathematical axioms are *not* axioms of general truth. What is true of *relation*—of form and quantity—is often grossly false in regard to morals, for example. In this latter science it is very usually *untrue* that the aggregated parts are equal to the whole. In chemistry, also, the axiom fails. In the consideration of motive it fails; for two motives, each of a given value, have not, necessarily, a value when united equal to the sum of their values apart. There are numerous other mathematical truths which are only truths within the limits of *relation*. But the mathematician argues, from his *finite truths*, through habit, as if they were of an absolutely general applicability—as the world indeed imagines them to be. Bryant,<sup>82</sup> in his very learned ‘Mythology,’ mentions an analogous source of error, when he says that ‘although the Pagan fables are not believed, yet we forget ourselves continually, and make inferences from them as existing realities.’ With the algebraists, however, who are Pagans themselves, the ‘Pagan fables’ *are* believed and the inferences are made, not so much through lapse of memory as through an unaccountable addling of the brains. In short I never yet encountered the mere mathematician who could be trusted out of equal roots, or one who did not clandestinely hold it as a point of his faith that  $x^2 + px$  was absolutely and unconditionally equal to  $q$ . Say to one of these gentlemen, by way of experiment, if you please, that you believe occasions may occur where  $x^2 + px$  is *not* altogether equal to  $q$ , and, having made him understand what you mean, get out of his reach as speedily as convenient, for, beyond doubt, he will endeavor to knock you down.

“I mean to say,” continued Dupin, while I merely laughed at his last observations, “that if the Minister had been no more than a mathematician, the Prefect would have been under no necessity of giving me this check. I knew him, however, as both mathematician and poet, and my measures were adapted to his capacity with reference to the circumstances by which he was surrounded. I knew him as courtier, too, and as a bold *intriguer*.<sup>83</sup> Such a man, I considered, could not fail to be aware of the ordinary po-

licial modes of action. He could not have failed to anticipate—and events have proved that he did not fail to anticipate—the waylayings to which he was subjected. He must have foreseen, I reflected, the secret investigation of his premises. His frequent absences from home at night, which were hailed by the Prefect as certain aids to his success, I regarded only as ruses, to afford opportunity for thorough search to the police, and thus the sooner to impress them with the conviction to which G——, in fact, did finally arrive,—the conviction that the letter was not upon the premises. I felt, also, that the whole train of thought, which I was at some pains in detailing to you just now, concerning the invariable principle of policial action in searches for articles concealed—I felt that this whole train of thought would necessarily pass through the mind of the Minister. It would imperatively lead him to despise all the ordinary *nooks* of concealment. *He* could not, I reflected, be so weak as not to see that the most intricate and remote recess of his Hotel would be as open as his commonest closets to the eyes, to the probes, to the gimlets, and to the microscopes of the Prefect. I saw, in fine, that he would be driven, as a matter of course, to *simplicity*, if not deliberately induced to it as a matter of choice. You will remember, perhaps, how desperately the Prefect laughed when I suggested, upon our first interview, that it was just possible this mystery troubled him so much on account of its being so *very* self-evident.”

“Yes,” said I, “I remember his merriment well. I really thought he would have fallen into convulsions.”

“The material world,” continued Dupin, “abounds with very strict analogies to the immaterial; and thus some color of truth has been given to the rhetorical dogma, that metaphor, or simile, may be made to strengthen an argument, as well as to embellish a description. The principle of the *vis inertiae*,<sup>84</sup> for example, seems to be identical in physics and metaphysics. It is not more true in the former, that a large body is with more difficulty set in motion than a smaller one, and that its subsequent momentum is commensurate with this difficulty, than it is, in the latter, that intellects of the vaster capacity, while more forcible, more constant, and more eventful in their movements than those of inferior grade, are yet the less readily moved, and more embarrassed and

<sup>82</sup> Jacob Bryant (1715–1804), author of *A New System, or an Analysis of Ancient Mythology*, London, 1774–76.

<sup>83</sup> Intriguer.

<sup>84</sup> Force of inertia.

full of hesitation in the first few steps of their progress. Again: have you ever noticed which of the street signs over the shop doors are the most attractive of attention?"

"I have never given the matter a thought," I said.

"There is a game of puzzles," he resumed, "which is played upon a map. One party playing requires another to find a given word,—the name of town, river, state, or empire,—any word, in short, upon the motley and perplexed surface of the chart. A novice in the game generally seeks to embarrass his opponents by giving them the most minutely lettered names; but the adept selects such words as stretch in large characters, from one end of the chart to the other. These, like the over-largely lettered signs and placards of the street, escape observation by dint of being excessively obvious; and here the physical oversight is precisely analogous with the moral inapprehension by which the intellect suffers to pass unnoticed those considerations which are too obtrusively and too palpably self-evident. But this is a point, it appears, somewhat above or beneath the understanding of the Prefect. He never once thought it probable, or possible, that the Minister had deposited the letter immediately beneath the nose of the whole world by way of best preventing any portion of that world from perceiving it.

"But the more I reflected upon the daring, dashing, and discriminating ingenuity of D—; upon the fact that the document must always have been *at hand*, if he intended to use it to good purpose; and upon the decisive evidence, obtained by the Prefect, that it was not hidden within the limits of that dignitary's ordinary search—the more satisfied I became that, to conceal this letter, the Minister had resorted to the comprehensive and sagacious expedient of not attempting to conceal it at all.

"Full of these ideas, I prepared myself with a pair of green spectacles, and called one fine morning, quite by accident, at the Ministerial Hotel. I found D— at home, yawning, lounging, and dawdling, as usual, and pretending to be in the last extremity of *ennui*.<sup>85</sup> He is, perhaps, the most really energetic human being now alive—but that is only when nobody sees him.

"To be even with him, I complained of my weak eyes, and lamented the necessity of the spectacles, under cover of which I cautiously and thoroughly

surveyed the whole apartment, while seemingly intent only upon the conversation of my host.

"I paid especial attention to a large writing-table near which he sat, and upon which lay confusedly some miscellaneous letters and other papers, with one or two musical instruments and a few books. Here, however, after a long and very deliberate scrutiny, I saw nothing to excite particular suspicion.

"At length my eyes, in going the circuit of the room, fell upon a trumpery filigree card-rack of pasteboard, that hung, dangling, by a dirty blue ribbon, from a little brass knob just beneath the middle of the mantelpiece. In this rack, which had three or four compartments, were five or six visiting cards and a solitary letter. This last was much soiled and crumpled. It was torn nearly in two, across the middle—as if a design, in the first instance, to tear it entirely up as worthless had been altered, or stayed, in the second. It had a large black seal, bearing the D— cipher very conspicuously, and was addressed, in a diminutive female hand, to D—, the Minister himself. It was thrust carelessly, and even, as it seemed, contemptuously, into one of the upper divisions of the rack.

"No sooner had I glanced at this letter than I concluded it to be that of which I was in search. To be sure, it was, to all appearance, radically different from the one of which the Prefect had read us so minute a description. Here the seal was large and black, with the D— cipher; there it was small and red, with the ducal arms of the S— family. Here, the address, to the Minister, was diminutive and feminine; there, the superscription, to a certain royal personage, was markedly bold and decided; the size alone formed a point of correspondence. But, then, the *radicalness* of these differences, which was excessive; the dirt; the soiled and torn condition of the paper, so inconsistent with the *true* methodical habits of D—, and so suggestive of a design to delude the beholder into an idea of the worthlessness of the document; these things, together with the hyperobtrusive situation of this document, full in the view of every visitor, and thus exactly in accordance with the conclusions to which I had previously arrived; these things, I say, were strongly corroborative of suspicion, in one who came with the intention to suspect.

"I protracted my visit as long as possible, and while I maintained a most animated discussion with

<sup>85</sup> Boredom.

the Minister, upon a topic which I knew well had never failed to interest and excite him, I kept my attention really riveted upon the letter. In this examination, I committed to memory its external appearance and arrangement in the rack; and also fell, at length, upon a discovery which set at rest whatever trivial doubt I might have entertained. In scrutinizing the edges of the paper, I observed them to be more *chafed* than seemed necessary. They presented the *broken* appearance which is manifested when a stiff paper, having been once folded and pressed with a folder, is refolded in a reversed direction, in the same creases or edges which had formed the original fold. This discovery was sufficient. It was clear to me that the letter had been turned, as a glove, inside out, re-directed, and re-sealed. I bade the Minister good-morning, and took my departure at once, leaving a gold snuffbox upon the table.

"The next morning I called for the snuffbox, when we resumed, quite eagerly, the conversation of the preceding day. While thus engaged, however, a loud report, as if of a pistol, was heard immediately beneath the windows of the Hotel, and was succeeded by a series of fearful screams, and the shoutings of a terrified mob. D—— rushed to a casement, threw it open, and looked out. In the meantime, I stepped to the card-rack, took the letter, put it in my pocket, and replaced it by a facsimile (so far as regards externals) which I had carefully prepared at my lodgings—imitating the D—— cipher very readily by means of a seal formed of bread.

"The disturbance in the street had been occasioned by the frantic behavior of a man with a musket. He had fired it among a crowd of women and children. It proved, however, to have been without ball, and the fellow was suffered to go his way as a lunatic or a drunkard. When he had gone, D—— came from the window, whither I had followed him immediately upon securing the object in view. Soon afterwards I bade him farewell. The pretended lunatic was a man in my own pay."

"But what purpose had you," I asked, "in replacing the letter by a facsimile? Would it not have been better, at the first visit, to have seized it openly and departed?"

"D——," replied Dupin, "is a desperate man, and

a man of nerve. His Hotel, too, is not without attendants devoted to his interest. Had I made the wild attempt you suggest, I might never have left the Ministerial presence alive. The good people of Paris might have heard of me no more. But I had an object apart from these considerations. You know my political prepossessions. In this matter I act as a partisan of the lady concerned. For eighteen months the Minister has had her in his power. She has now him in hers—since, being unaware that the letter is not in his possession, he will proceed with his exactions as if it was. Thus will he inevitably commit himself at once to his political destruction. His downfall, too, will not be more precipitate than awkward. It is all very well to talk about the *facilis descensus Avernus*,<sup>86</sup> but in all kinds of climbing, as Catalani said of singing, it is far more easy to get up than to come down. In the present instance I have no sympathy—at least no pity—for him who descends. He is that *monstrum horrendum*,<sup>87</sup> an unprincipled man of genius. I confess, however, that I should like very well to know the precise character of his thoughts, when, being defied by her whom the Prefect terms 'a certain personage,' he is reduced to opening the letter which I left for him in the card-rack."

"How? Did you put anything particular in it?"

"Why—it did not seem altogether right to leave the interior blank—that would have been insulting. D——, at Vienna once, did me an evil turn, which I told you, quite good-humoredly, that I should remember. So, as I knew he would feel some curiosity in regard to the identity of the person who had outwitted him, I thought it a pity not to give him a clew. He is well acquainted with my MS., and I just copied into the middle of the blank sheet the words:—

'—un dessein si funeste,  
S'il n'est digne d'Atrée, est digne de Thyeste.'<sup>88</sup>

They are to be found in Crébillon's *Atrée*."<sup>89</sup>

1845

<sup>86</sup> "Easy is the descent into Avernus," the infernal regions. A much quoted passage from the *Aeneid*, VI, 126.

<sup>87</sup> Dreadful monster.

<sup>88</sup> "A design so fatal, if it is not worthy of Atreus, is worthy of Thyestes."

<sup>89</sup> Prosper Jolyot de Crébillon (1674-1762), a French classical tragedian, produced *Atrée (Atreus)* in 1707.

*The Cask of Amontillado*<sup>90</sup>

The thousand injuries of Fortunato I had borne as I best could, but when he ventured upon insult I vowed revenge. You, who so well know the nature of my soul, will not suppose, however, that I gave utterance to a threat. *At length* I would be avenged; this was a point definitely settled—but the very definitiveness with which it was resolved precluded the idea of risk. I must not only punish but punish with impunity. A wrong is unredressed when retribution overtakes its redresser. It is equally unredressed when the avenger fails to make himself felt as such to him who has done the wrong.

It must be understood that neither by word nor deed had I given Fortunato cause to doubt my good will. I continued, as was my wont, to smile in his face, and he did not perceive that my smile *now* was at the thought of his immolation.

He had a weak point—this Fortunato—although in other regards he was a man to be respected and even feared. He prided himself on his connoisseurship in wine. Few Italians have the true virtuoso spirit. For the most part their enthusiasm is adopted to suit the time and opportunity, to practise imposture upon the British and Austrian millionaires. In painting and gemmery,<sup>92</sup> Fortunato, like his countrymen, was a quack, but in the matter of old wines he was sincere. In this respect I did not differ from him materially;—I was skilful in the Italian vintages myself, and bought largely whenever I could.

It was about dusk, one evening during the supreme madness of the carnival season, that I encountered my friend. He accosted me with excessive warmth, for he had been drinking much. The man wore motley. He had on a tight-fitting parti-striped dress, and his head was surmounted by the conical cap and bells. I was so pleased to see him that I thought I should never have done wringing his hand.

I said to him—"My dear Fortunato, you are luckily met. How remarkably well you are looking

to-day. But I have received a pipe<sup>93</sup> of what passes for Amontillado,<sup>94</sup> and I have my doubts."

"How?" said he. "Amontillado? A pipe? Impossible! And in the middle of the carnival!"

"I have my doubts," I replied; "and I was silly enough to pay the full Amontillado price without consulting you in the matter. You were not to be found, and I was fearful of losing a bargain."

"Amontillado!"

"I have my doubts."

"Amontillado!"

"And I must satisfy them."

"Amontillado!"

"As you are engaged, I am on my way to Luchresi.<sup>95</sup> If any one has a critical turn it is he. He will tell me—"

"Luchresi cannot tell Amontillado from Sherry."

"And yet some fools will have it that his taste is a match for your own."

"Come, let us go."

"Whither?"

"To your vaults."

"My friend, no; I will not impose upon your good nature. I perceive you have an engagement. Luchresi—"

"I have no engagement;—come."

"My friend, no. It is not the engagement, but the severe cold with which I perceive you are afflicted. The vaults are insufferably damp. They are encrusted with nitre."

"Let us go, nevertheless. The cold is merely nothing. Amontillado! You have been imposed upon. And as for Luchresi, he cannot distinguish Sherry from Amontillado."

Thus speaking, Fortunato possessed himself of my arm; and putting on a mask of black silk and drawing a *roquelaire*<sup>96</sup> closely about my person, I suffered him to hurry me to my palazzo.<sup>97</sup>

There were no attendants at home; they had absconded to make merry in honour of the time. I

<sup>90</sup> First published in *Godey's Lady's Book*, November, 1846. Considered by many to be Poe's best short story. The tale illustrates well Poe's adeptness at handling contrasts with telling effect. Another noteworthy feature is its economy, for it includes nothing that does not contribute to the singleness of effect which Poe aimed at.

<sup>91</sup> Skillful and accomplished practitioner.

<sup>92</sup> The science of gems.

<sup>93</sup> Small barrel.

<sup>94</sup> A sweet sherry coming from Montilla, Spain.

<sup>95</sup> Presumably Fortunato's rival.

<sup>96</sup> A short cloak.

<sup>97</sup> Literally, a palace, or the house of a person of wealth or rank.

had told them that I should not return until the morning, and had given them explicit orders not to stir from the house. These orders were sufficient, I well knew, to insure their immediate disappearance, one and all, as soon as my back was turned.

I took from their sconces two flambeaux, and giving one to Fortunato, bowed him through several suites of rooms to the archway that led into the vaults. I passed down a long and winding staircase, requesting him to be cautious as he followed. We came at length to the foot of the descent, and stood together upon the damp ground of the catacombs of the Montresors.

The gait of my friend was unsteady, and the bells upon his cap jingled as he strode.

"The pipe," he said.

"It is farther on," said I; "but observe the white web-work which gleams from these cavern walls."

He turned towards me, and looked into my eyes with two filmy orbs that distilled the rheum of intoxication.

"Nitre?" he asked, at length.

"Nitre," I replied. "How long have you had that cough?"

"Ugh! ugh! ugh!—ugh! ugh! ugh!—ugh! ugh! ugh!—ugh! ugh! ugh!—ugh! ugh! ugh!"

My poor friend found it impossible to reply for many minutes.

"It is nothing," he said, at last.

"Come," I said, with decision, "we will go back; 30 your health is precious. You are rich, respected, admired, beloved; you are happy, as once I was. You are a man to be missed. For me it is no matter. We will go back; you will be ill, and I cannot be responsible. Besides, there is Luchresi—"

"Enough," he said; "the cough is a mere nothing; it will not kill me. I shall not die of a cough."

"True—true," I replied; "and, indeed, I had no intention of alarming you unnecessarily—but you should use all proper caution. A draught of this 40 Medoc<sup>98</sup> will defend us from the damps."

Here I knocked off the neck of a bottle which I drew from a long row of its fellows that lay upon the mould.

"Drink," I said, presenting him the wine.

He raised it to his lips with a leer. He paused and nodded to me familiarly, while his bells jingled.

<sup>98</sup> A French claret.

"I drink," he said, "to the buried that repose around us."

"And I to your long life."

He again took my arm, and we proceeded.

"These vaults," he said, "are extensive."

"The Montresors," I replied, "were a great and numerous family."

"I forget your arms."

"A huge human foot d'or, in a field azure;<sup>99</sup> the foot crushes a serpent rampant whose fangs are imbedded in the heel."

"And the motto?"

"*Nemo me impune lacessit.*"<sup>100</sup>

"Good" he said.

The wine sparkled in his eyes and the bells jingled. My own fancy grew warm with the Medoc. We had passed through long walls of piled skeletons, with casks and punchcons intermingling, into the inmost recesses of the catacombs. I paused again, and this time I made bold to seize Fortunato by an arm above the elbow.

"The nitre!" I said; "see, it increases. It hangs like moss upon the vaults. We are below the river's bed. The drops of moisture trickle among the bones. Come, we will go back ere it is too late. Your cough—"

"It is nothing," he said; "let us go on. But first, another draught of the Medoc."

I broke and reached him a flagon of De Grève.<sup>101</sup> He emptied it at a breath. His eyes flashed with a fierce light. He laughed and threw the bottle upwards with a gesticulation I did not understand.

I looked at him in surprise. He repeated the movement—a grotesque one.

"You do not comprehend?" he said.

"Not I," I replied.

"Then you are not of the brotherhood."

"How?"

"You are not of the masons."

"Yes, yes," I said; "yes, yes."

"You? Impossible! A mason?"

"A mason," I replied.

"A sign," he said, "a sign."

"It is this," I answered, producing from beneath the folds of my *roquelaire* a trowel.

<sup>99</sup> A golden foot on a blue field.

<sup>100</sup> "No one attacks me with impunity." Poe seems to have adopted the motto from the royal arms of Scotland.

<sup>101</sup> A light wine produced in the region around De Grève.

"You jest," he exclaimed, recoiling a few paces. "But let us proceed to the Amontillado."

"Be it so," I said, replacing the tool beneath the cloak and again offering him my arm. He leaned upon it heavily. We continued our route in search of the Amontillado. We passed through a range of low arches, descended, passed on, and descending again, arrived at a deep crypt, in which the foulness of the air caused our flambeaux rather to glow than flame.

At the most remote end of the crypt there appeared another less spacious. Its walls had been lined with human remains, piled to the vault overhead, in the fashion of the great catacombs of Paris. Three sides of this interior crypt were still ornamented in this manner. From the fourth side the bones had been thrown down, and lay promiscuously upon the earth, forming at one point a mound of some size. Within the wall thus exposed by the displacing of the bones, we perceived a still interior crypt or recess, 20 in depth about four feet, in width three, in height six or seven. It seemed to have been constructed for no especial use within itself, but formed merely the interval between two of the colossal supports of the roof of the catacombs, and was backed by one of their circumscribing walls of solid granite.

It was in vain that Fortunato, uplifting his dull torch, endeavoured to pry into the depth of the recess. Its termination the feeble light did not enable us to see.

"Proceed," I said; "herein is the Amontillado. As for Luchresi—"

"He is an ignoramus," interrupted my friend, as he stepped unsteadily forward, while I followed immediately at his heels. In an instant he had reached the extremity of the niche, and finding his progress arrested by the rock, stood stupidly bewildered. A moment more and I had fettered him to the granite. In its surface were two iron staples, distant from each other about two feet, horizontally. From one of these 40 depended a short chain, from the other a padlock. Throwing the links about his waist, it was but the work of a few seconds to secure it. He was too much astounded to resist. Withdrawing the key, I stepped back from the recess.

"Pass your hand," I said, "over the wall; you cannot help feeling the nitre. Indeed, it is *very* damp. Once more let me *implore* you to return. No? Then

I must positively leave you. But I must first render you all the little attentions in my power."

"The Amontillado!" ejaculated my friend, not yet recovered from his astonishment.

"True," I replied; "the Amontillado."

As I said these words I busied myself among the pile of bones of which I have before spoken. Throwing them aside, I soon uncovered a quantity of building stone and mortar. With these materials and with 10 the aid of my trowel, I began vigorously to wall up the entrance of the niche.

I had scarcely laid the first tier of the masonry when I discovered that the intoxication of Fortunato had in a great measure worn off. The earliest indication I had of this was a low moaning cry from the depth of the recess. It was *not* the cry of a drunken man. There was then a long and obstinate silence. I laid the second tier, and the third, and the fourth; and then I heard the furious vibrations of the chain. The noise lasted for several minutes, during which, that I might hearken to it with the more satisfaction, I ceased my labours and sat down upon the bones. When at last the clanking subsided, I resumed the trowel, and finished without interruption the fifth, the sixth, and the seventh tier. The wall was now nearly upon a level with my breast. I again paused, and holding the flambeaux over the mason-work, threw a few feeble rays upon the figure within.

30 A succession of loud and shrill screams, bursting suddenly from the throat of the chained form, seemed to thrust me violently back. For a brief moment I hesitated, I trembled. Unsheathing my rapier, I began to grope with it about the recess; but the thought of an instant reassured me. I placed my hand upon the solid fabric of the catacombs, and felt satisfied. I reapproached the wall; I replied to the yells of him who clamoured. I re-echoed, I aided, I surpassed them in volume and in strength. I did this, 40 and the clamour grew still.

It was now midnight, and my task was drawing to a close. I had completed the eighth, the ninth and the tenth tier. I had finished a portion of the last and the eleventh; there remained but a single stone to be fitted and plastered in. I struggled with its weight; I placed it partially in its destined position. But now there came from out the niche a low laugh that erected the hairs upon my head. It was succeeded by



a sad voice, which I had difficulty in recognizing as that of the noble Fortunato. The voice said—

“Ha! ha! ha—he! he! he!—a very good joke, indeed—an excellent jest. We will have many a rich laugh about it at the palazzo—he! he! he!—over our wine—he! he! he!”

“The Amontillado!” I said.

“He! he! he!—he! he! he!—yes, the Amontillado. But is it not getting late? Will not they be awaiting us at the palazzo, the Lady Fortunato and the rest? <sup>10</sup> Let us be gone.”

“Yes,” I said, “let us be gone.”

“For the love of God, Montresor!”

“Yes,” I said, “for the love of God!”

But to these words I hearkened in vain for a reply. I grew impatient. I called aloud—

“Fortunato!”

No answer. I called again—

“Fortunato!”

No answer still. I thrust a torch through the remaining aperture and let it fall within. There came forth in return only a jingling of the bells. My heart grew sick; it was the dampness of the catacombs that made it so. I hastened to make an end of my labour. I forced the last stone into its position; I plastered it up. Against the new masonry I re-erected the old rampart of bones. For the half of a century no mortal has disturbed them. *In pace requiescat!* <sup>102</sup>

1846

<sup>102</sup> “May he rest in peace,” a common inscription found on tombstones.

### *Tamerlane* <sup>103</sup>

Kind solace in a dying hour!

Such, father, is not (now) my theme—

I will not madly deem that power

Of Earth may shrive me of the sin

Unearthly pride hath revell'd in—

I have no time to dote or dream:

You call it hope—that fire of fire!

It is but agony of desire:

If I *can* hope—oh, God! I can—

Its fount is holier—more divine—

I would not call thee fool, old man,

But such is not a gift of thine.

Know thou the secret of a spirit

Bow'd from its wide pride into shame.

O yearning heart! I did inherit

Thy withering portion with the fame,

<sup>103</sup> This poem first appeared in Poe's volume of verses, *Tamerlane and Other Poems* (Boston, 1827). Although Poe said of this volume, “The greater part of the poems which compose this little volume were written in the year 1821–22, when the author had not completed his fourteenth year,” it is generally thought that “Tamerlane” was written in 1826. Based on the history of the Scythian or Tartar conqueror Tamerlane (which Poe could have derived from a number of sources), the poem shows obvious influences from such verse tales as Byron's *Giaour* and his play, *Manfred*. This story of frustrated love is thought to reflect Poe's unhappy love affair with Elmira Royster. The poem is a dramatic monologue in which the hero makes a defiant deathbed confession to a “holy friar.”

In subsequent reprintings this poem was drastically revised. The text herewith presented is that of 1845, embodying Poe's latest and most maturely considered revisions.

The searing glory which hath shone

Amid the jewels of my throne,

Halo of Hell! and with a pain

Not Hell shall make me fear again—

20

O craving heart, for the lost flowers

And sunshine of my summer hours!

The undying voice of that dead time,

With its interminable chime,

Rings, in the spirit of a spell,

Upon thy emptiness—a knell.

I have not always been as now:

The fever'd diadem on my brow

I claim'd and won usurpingly—

Hath not the same fierce heirdom given

30

Rome to the Cæsar—this to me?

The heritage of a kingly mind,

And a proud spirit which hath striven

Triumphantly with human kind.

On mountain soil I first drew life:

The mists of the Taglay \* have shed

Nightly their dew upon my head,

And, I believe, the winged strife

And tumult of the headlong air

Have nestled in my very hair.

40

\* The mountains of Belur Taglay are a branch of the Imaus, in the southern part of Independent Tartary.—They are celebrated for the singular wildness and beauty of their valleys.

So late from Heaven—that dew—it fell  
 ('Mid dreams of an unholy night)  
 Upon me with the touch of Hell,  
 While the red flashing of the light  
 From clouds that hung, like banners, o'er,  
 Appeared to my half-closing eye  
 The pageantry of monarchy,  
 And the deep trumpet-thunder's roar  
 Came hurriedly upon me, telling  
 Of human battle, where my voice,  
 My own voice, silly child! was swelling  
 (O! how my spirit would rejoice,  
 And leap within me at the cry)  
 The battle-cry of Victory!

The rain came down upon my head  
 Unshelter'd—and the heavy wind  
 Rendered me mad and deaf and blind.  
 It was but man, I thought, who shed  
 Laurels upon me: and the rush,  
 The torrent of the chilly air  
 Gurgled within my ear the crush  
 Of empires—with the captive's prayer—  
 The hum of suitors—and the tone  
 Of flattery round a sovereign's throne.

My passions, from that hapless hour,  
 Usurp'd a tyranny which men  
 Have deem'd, since I have reach'd to power,  
 My innate nature—be it so:  
 But, father, there liv'd one who, then,  
 Then—in my boyhood—when their fire  
 Burn'd with a still intenser glow  
 (For passion must, with youth, expire)  
 E'en *then* who knew this iron heart  
 In woman's weakness had a part.

I have no words—alas!—to tell  
 The loveliness of loving well!  
 Nor would I now attempt to trace  
 The more than beauty of a face  
 Whose lineaments, upon my mind,  
 Are—shadows on th' unstable wind:  
 Thus I remember having dwelt  
 Some page of early lore upon,  
 With loitering eye, till I have felt  
 The letters—with their meaning—melt  
 To fantasies—with none.

O, she was worthy of all love!  
 Love—as in infancy was mine—

'Twas such as angel minds above  
 Might envy; her young heart the shrine  
 On which my every hope and thought  
 Were incense—then a goodly gift,  
 For they were childish and upright—  
 Pure—as her young example taught:  
 Why did I leave it, and, adrift,  
 Trust to the fire within, for light?

50 We grew in age—and love—together—  
 Roaming the forest and the wild;  
 My breast her shield in wintry weather—  
 And, when the friendly sunshine smil'd,  
 And she would mark the opening skies,  
 I saw no Heaven—but in her eyes. 100

Young Love's first lesson is—the heart:  
 For 'mid that sunshine and those smiles,  
 When, from our little cares apart,  
 And laughing at her girlish wiles,  
 I'd throw me on her throbbing breast,  
 And pour my spirit out in tears—  
 There was no need to speak the rest—  
 No need to quiet any fears  
 Of her—who ask'd no reason why, 110  
 But turned on me her quiet eye! <sup>104</sup>

Yet *more* than worthy of the love  
 My spirit struggled with, and strove,  
 When, on the mountain peak, alone,  
 Ambition lent it a new tone—  
 I had no being—but in thee:  
 70 The world, and all it did contain  
 In the earth—the air—the sea—  
 Its joy—its little lot of pain  
 That was new pleasure—the ideal, 120  
 Dim, vanities of dreams by night—  
 And dimmer nothings which were real—  
 (Shadows—and a more shadowy light!)  
 Parted upon their misty wings,  
 And, so, confusedly, became  
 Thine image and—a name—a name!  
 80 Two separate—yet most intimate things.

I was ambitious—have you known  
 The passion, father? You have not:  
 A cottager, I mark'd a throne 130  
 Of half the world as all my own,  
 And murmur'd at such lowly lot—

<sup>104</sup> It may be observed that Poe makes a good deal of eyes both in his tales and in his poems.

But, just like any other dream,  
 Upon the vapor of the dew  
 My own had past, did not the beam  
 Of beauty which did while it thro'  
 The minute—the hour—the day—oppress  
 My mind with double loveliness.

We walk'd together on the crown  
 Of a high mountain which look'd down  
 Afar from its proud natural towers

Of rock and forest, on the hills—  
 The dwindled hills! begirt with bowers  
 And shouting with a thousand rills.

I spoke to her of power and pride,  
 But mystically—in such guise  
 That she might deem it nought beside  
 The moment's converse; in her eyes  
 I read, perhaps too carelessly,

A mingled feeling with my own—  
 The flush on her bright cheek, to me  
 Seem'd to become a queenly throne  
 Too well that I should let it be  
 Light in the wilderness alone.

I wrapp'd myself in grandeur then  
 And donn'd a visionary crown—  
 Yet it was not that Fantasy  
 Had thrown her mantle over me—

But that, among the rabble—men,  
 Lion ambition is chain'd down—  
 And crouches to a keeper's hand—  
 Not so in deserts where the grand—  
 The wild—the terrible conspire  
 With their own breath to fan his fire.

Look round thee now on Samarcand!—<sup>105</sup>  
 Is she not queen of Earth? her pride  
 Above all cities? in her hand

Their destinies? in all beside  
 Of glory which the world hath known  
 Stands she not nobly and alone?  
 Falling—her veriest stepping-stone  
 Shall form the pedestal of a throne—  
 And who her sovereign? Timour <sup>106</sup>—he

Whom the astonished people saw  
 Striding o'er empires haughtily  
 A diadem'd outlaw!

O, human love! thou spirit given,

<sup>105</sup> A city in central Asia destroyed by Alexander in 329 B.C.

<sup>106</sup> A variant of Tamerlane.

On Earth, of all we hope in Heaven!  
 Which fall'st into the soul like rain  
 Upon the Siroc-wither'd plain, 180  
 And, failing in thy power to bless,  
 But leav'st the heart a wilderness!  
 Idea! which bindest life around  
 With music of so strange a sound  
 And beauty of so wild a birth—  
 Farewell! for I have won the Earth.

When Hope, the eagle that tower'd, could see  
 No cliff beyond him in the sky,  
 His pinions were bent droopingly—  
 And homeward turn'd his soften'd eye. 190  
 'Twas sunset: when the sun will part  
 There comes a sullenness of heart  
 To him who still would look upon  
 The glory of the summer sun.  
 That soul will hate the ev'ning mist 150  
 So often lovely, and will list  
 To the sound of the coming darkness (known  
 To those whose spirits harken) as one  
 Who, in a dream of night, *would* fly  
 But *cannot* from a danger nigh. 200

What tho' the moon—the white moon—  
 Shed all the splendor of her noon,  
 Her smile is chilly—and her beam,  
 In that time of dreariness, will seem 160  
 (So like you gather in your breath)  
 A portrait taken after death.  
 And boyhood is a summer sun  
 Whose waning is the dreariest one.  
 For all we live to know is known,  
 And all we seek to keep hath flown. 210  
 Let life, then, as the day-flower, fall  
 With the noon-day beauty—which is all.

I reach'd my home—my home no more—  
 For all had flown who made it so.  
 I pass'd from out its mossy door, 170  
 And, tho' my tread was soft and low,  
 A voice came from the threshold stone  
 Of one whom I had earlier known—  
 O, I defy thee, Hell, to show  
 On beds of fire that burn below, 220  
 An humbler heart—a deeper wo.

Father, I firmly do believe—  
 I *know*—for Death who comes for me  
 From regions of the blest afar,

Where there is nothing to deceive,  
 Hath left his iron gate ajar,  
 And rays of truth you cannot see  
 Are flashing thro' Eternity—  
 I do believe that Eblis<sup>107</sup> hath  
 A snare in every human path—  
 Else how, when in the holy grove  
 I wandered of the idol, Love  
 Who daily scents his snowy wings  
 With incense of burnt offerings  
 From the most unpolluted things,  
 Whose pleasant bowers are yet so riven  
 Above with trellis'd rays from Heaven  
 No mote may shun—no tiniest fly—  
 The light'ning of his eagle eye—  
 How was it that Ambition crept,  
 Unseen, amid the revels there,  
 Till growing bold, he laughed and leapt  
 In the tangles of Love's very hair?<sup>108</sup>  
 c. 1826

### Song<sup>109</sup>

I saw thee on thy bridal day,  
 When a burning blush came o'er thee,  
 Though happiness around thee lay,  
 The world all love before thee:  
 And in thine eye a kindling light  
 (Whatever it might be)  
 Was all on Earth my aching sight  
 Of Loveliness could see.  
 That blush, perhaps, was maiden shame—  
 As such it well may pass—  
 Though its glow hath raised a fiercer flame  
 In the breast of him, alas!  
 Who saw thee on that bridal day,  
 When that deep blush *would* come o'er thee,

<sup>107</sup> Professor Killis Campbell, in his excellent edition of Poe's poems, calls attention to the following passage from Sale's "Preliminary Discourse" on the Koran (Philadelphia, 1856), p. 52: "The devil, whom Mohammed named Eblis, for his despair, was once one of those angels who are nearest to God's presence, called Azazel, and fell, according to the doctrine of the Koran (chap. ii), for refusing to pay homage to Adam at the command of God."

<sup>108</sup> Compare Milton's *Lycidas*, l. 69.

<sup>109</sup> First published in the 1827 volume; text follows the 1845 version. Generally believed to refer to the marriage of Elmira Royster. The bride's blush would then be interpreted as a blush of shame at having deserted her true love.

Though happiness around thee lay,  
 The world all love before thee.  
 1827

1845

230

### Dreams<sup>110</sup>

Oh! that my young life were a lasting dream!  
 My spirit not awak'ning till the beam  
 Of an Eternity should bring the morrow.  
 Yes! tho' that long dream were of hopeless sorrow,  
 'T were better than the cold reality  
 Of waking life, to him whose heart must be,  
 And hath been still, upon the lovely earth,  
 A chaos of deep passion, from his birth.  
 But should it be—that dream eternally  
 Continuing—as dreams have been to me  
 In my young boyhood—should it thus be giv'n,  
 'T were folly still to hope for higher Heav'n.  
 For I have revell'd, when the sun was bright  
 I' the summer sky, in dreams of living light  
 And loveliness,—have left my very heart  
 In climes of mine imagining, apart  
 From mine own home, with beings that have been  
 Of mine own thought—what more could I have  
 seen?  
 'T was once—and only once—and the wild hour  
 From my remembrance shall not pass—some  
 Pow'r  
 Or spell had bound me—'t was the chilly wind  
 Came o'er me in the night, and left behind  
 Its image on my spirit—or the moon  
 Shone on my slumbers in her lofty noon  
 Too coldly—or the stars—howe'er it was,  
 That dream was as that night-wind—let it pass.  
 I *have been* happy, tho' [but] in a dream.  
 I have been happy—and I love the theme:  
 Dreams! in their vivid coloring of life,  
 As in that fleeting, shadowy, misty strife  
 Of semblance with reality which brings  
 To the delirious eye, more lovely things  
 Of Paradise and Love—and all our own!  
 Than young Hope in his sunniest hour hath known.  
 c. 1826–1827

10

20

10

30

1827

<sup>110</sup> "Dreams" was one of the four poems of the 1827 volume that were not reprinted by Poe in later editions of his poems. Like the preceding poem, it appears to reflect his unhappy love affair with Miss Royster. The poem exhibits a peculiar mixture of crudities and superb lines.

*A Dream within a Dream* <sup>111</sup>

Take this kiss upon the brow!  
 And, in parting from you now,  
 Thus much let me avow:  
 You are not wrong, who deem  
 That my days have been a dream;  
 Yet if Hope has flown away  
 In a night, or in a day,  
 In a vision, or in none,  
 Is it therefore the less *gone*?  
*All* that we see or seem  
 Is but a dream within a dream.

I stand amid the roar  
 Of a surf-tormented shore,  
 And I hold within my hand  
 Grains of the golden sand—  
 How few! yet how they creep  
 Through my fingers to the deep,  
 While I weep—while I weep!  
 O God! can I not grasp  
 Them with a tighter clasp?  
 O God! can I not save  
 One from the pitiless wave?  
 Is *all* that we see or seem  
 But a dream within a dream?  
 1827

1849

*"The Happiest Day, the Happiest Hour"* <sup>112</sup>

The happiest day, the happiest hour  
 My sear'd and blighted heart hath known,  
 The highest hope of pride and power,  
 I feel hath flown.

Of power! said I? yes! such I wene;  
 But they have vanish'd long, alas!  
 The visions of my youth have been—  
 But let them pass.

<sup>111</sup> Appearing first in the 1827 volume, this poem on the transitoriness of his life underwent many changes in his numerous revisions until it received this final form when printed in the *Flag of Our Union*, March 31, 1849. In the first version it was entitled "Imitation," doubtless in concession to its indebtedness to Byron. For literary influences, consult Killis Campbell's definitive edition of Poe's *Poems* (Boston, 1917).

<sup>112</sup> Published without title in the 1827 edition, the text of which is here reproduced. The poem represents Poe, aged eighteen, satiated with life, after the fashion of the Byronic hero, especially Childe Harold.

And, pride, what have I now with thee?  
 Another brow may ev'n inherit  
 The venom thou hast pour'd on me—  
 Be still, my spirit!

10

The happiest day, the happiest hour  
 Mine eyes shall see, have ever seen,  
 The brightest glance of pride and power,  
 I feel—have been:

But were that hope of pride and power  
 Now offer'd, with the pain  
 Ev'n *then* I felt—that brightest hour  
 I would not live again:

20

For on its wing was dark alloy,  
 And as it flutter'd, fell  
 An essence—powerful to destroy  
 A soul that knew it well.

c. 1827

1827

*The Lake: To ———* <sup>113</sup>

In spring of youth it was my lot  
 To haunt of the wide world a spot  
 The which I could not love the less—  
 So lovely was the loneliness  
 Of a wild lake, with black rock bound,  
 And the tall pines that towered around.

20

But when the Night had thrown her pall  
 Upon that spot, as upon all,  
 And the mystic wind went by  
 Murmuring in melody,  
 Then—ah, then—I would awake  
 To the terror of the lone lake.

10

Yet that terror was not fright,  
 But a tremulous delight—  
 A feeling not the jewelled mine  
 Could teach or bribe me to define—  
 Nor Love—although the Love were thine.

Death was in that poisonous wave,  
 And in its gulf a fitting grave  
 For him who thence could solace bring  
 To his lone imagining,  
 Whose solitary soul could make  
 An Eden of that dim lake.

20

1827

1845

<sup>113</sup> Appearing first in the 1827 collection, this poem was republished four times during Poe's lifetime, every time with changes. This text follows the 1845 version.

Sonnet—To Science <sup>114</sup>

Science! true daughter of Old Time thou art!  
 Who alterest all things with thy peering eyes.  
 Why preyest thou thus upon the poet's heart,  
 Vulture, whose wings are dull realities?  
 How should he love thee? or how deem thee wise,  
 Who wouldst not leave him in his wandering  
 To seek for treasure in the jewelled skies,  
 Albeit he soared with an undaunted wing?  
 Hast thou not dragged Diana from her car,  
 And driven the Hamadryad from the wood 10  
 To seek a shelter in some happier star?  
 Hast thou not torn the Naiad from her flood,  
 The Elfin from the green grass, and from me  
 The summer dream beneath the tamarind tree?  
 c. 1829 1845

Romance <sup>115</sup>

Romance, who loves to nod and sing,  
 With drowsy head and folded wing,  
 Among the green leaves as they shake  
 Far down within some shadowy lake,  
 To me a painted paroquet  
 Hath been—a most familiar bird—  
 Taught me my alphabet to say,  
 To lisp my very earliest word,  
 While in the wild wood I did lie,  
 A child—with a most knowing eye. 10  
 Of late, eternal Condor years  
 So shake the very Heaven on high

<sup>114</sup> This poem (text of 1845) was first printed in the 1829 collection. It voices Poe's protest against the subtleties which would make poetry a study—not a passion, and his insistence that poetry is not to be confused with metaphysics. Poe repeatedly reiterated this idea, notably in his "Letter to B—," which formed the preface to the volume of 1831. Here Poe wrote (echoing in part Coleridge's famous statement in the *Biographia Literaria*, chap. xiv): "A poem, in my opinion, is opposed to a work of science by having, for its *immediate* object, pleasure, not truth; to romance, by having for its object an *indefinite* instead of a *definite* pleasure, being a poem only so far as this object is attained; romance presenting perceptible images with definite, poetry with *indefinite* sensations, to which end music is an *essential*, since the comprehension of sweet sound is our most indefinite conception. Music, when combined with a pleasurable idea, is poetry; music without the idea is simply music; the idea without the music is prose from its very definiteness."

<sup>115</sup> Written in 1829; text 1845. The poem is to be compared and contrasted with "Sonnet—to Science." For literary parallels and influences, see Professor Campbell's notes,

With tumult as they thunder by,  
 I have no time for idle cares  
 Through gazing on the unquiet sky.  
 And when an hour with calmer wings  
 Its down upon my spirit flings—  
 That little time with lyre and rhyme  
 To while away—forbidden things!  
 My heart would feel to be a crime 20  
 Unless it trembled with the strings.  
 1829 1845

## SONG FROM

Al Aaraaf <sup>116</sup>

## (PART II)

"'Neath blue-bell or streamer—  
 Or tufted wild spray  
 That keeps from the dreamer  
 The moonbeam away—  
 Bright beings! that ponder,  
 With half closing eyes,  
 On the stars which your wonder  
 Hath drawn from the skies,  
 Till they glance thro' the shade, and  
 Come down to your brow 10  
 Like—eyes of the maiden  
 Who calls on you now—  
 Arise! from your dreaming  
 In violet bowers,  
 To duty beseeching  
 These star-litten hours—  
 And shake from your tresses,  
 Encumber'd with dew,

<sup>116</sup> This poem, of which only the lyric of Part II is here reproduced, was probably written during 1827–29, while Poe was in the army. The text follows the 1845 version.

*Al Aaraaf*, perhaps the most formless and fragmentary of all of Poe's poems, represents *Al Aaraaf* (presumably the star discovered by the Swedish astronomer, Tycho Brahe) as peopled partly by the spirits of certain mortals who, in accordance with the Mohammedan tradition, were not good enough for heaven, but too good for hell, and partly by certain angels who had dwelt from the beginning in *Al Aaraaf* and are devotees of some of the nobler passions, as love and beauty, but who are without the supreme knowledge possessed by the angels in heaven. The central idea of the poem seems to be the divineness of beauty—a happy anticipation of Lanier's doctrine of the "holiness of beauty." There is also the subsidiary idea that knowledge may incapacitate one for the full appreciation of beauty. And in the story with which the poem concludes, the idea is developed that love may sometimes blind one to the beautiful in its diviner aspects. [Professor Campbell's interpretation.]

The lyric here reprinted is a song sung by the maiden Nesace, a type of ideal beauty.

The breath of those kisses  
 That cumber them too  
 (O, how, without you, Love!  
 Could angels be blest?)—  
 Those kisses of true love  
 That lull'd ye to rest!  
 Up!—shake from your wing  
 Each hindering thing:  
 The dew of the night—  
 It would weigh down your flight;  
 And true love caresses—  
 O! leave them apart:  
 They are light on the tresses,  
 But lead on the heart.

“Ligeia! Ligeia! <sup>117</sup>  
 My beautiful one!  
 Whose harshest idea  
 Will to melody run,  
 O! is it thy will  
 On the breezes to toss?  
 Or, capriciously still,  
 Like the lone Albatross,\*  
 Incumbent on night  
 (As she on the air)  
 To keep watch with delight  
 On the harmony there?

“Ligeia! wherever  
 Thy image may be,  
 No magic shall sever  
 Thy music from thee.  
 Thou hast bound many eyes  
 In a dreamy sleep—  
 But the strains still arise  
 Which *thy* vigilance keep:  
 The sound of the rain  
 Which leaps down to the flower,  
 And dances again  
 In the rhythm of the shower—  
 The murmur † that springs  
 From the growing of grass  
 Are the music of things—  
 But are modell'd, alas!—

<sup>117</sup> Ligeia is the personification of the harmony of nature.

\* The Albatross is said to sleep on the wing.

† I met with this idea in an old English tale, which I am unable to obtain [,] and quote from memory: “The verie essence and, as it were, springe-head and origine of all musicke is the very pleasaunte sounde which the trees of the forest do make when they growe.”

Away, then, my dearest,  
 O! hic thee away  
 To springs that lie clearest  
 Beneath the moon-ray—  
 To lone lake that smiles,  
 In its dream of deep rest,  
 At the many star-isles  
 That enjewel its breast—  
 Where wild flowers, creeping,  
 Have mingled their shade,  
 On its margin is sleeping  
 Full many a maid—  
 Some have left the cool glade, and  
 Have slept with the bee ‡—

Arouse them, my maiden,  
 On moorland and lea—  
 Go! breathe on their slumber,  
 All softly in ear,  
 The musical number  
 They slumber'd to hear—  
 For what can awaken  
 An angel so soon,  
 Whose sleep hath been taken  
 Beneath the cold moon,  
 As the spell which no slumber  
 Of witchery may test,  
 The rhythmical number  
 Which lull'd him to rest?”

1829

1845

### Alone <sup>118</sup>

From childhood's hour I have not been  
 As others were—I have not seen  
 As others saw—I could not bring  
 My passions from a common spring—

‡ The wild bee will not sleep in the shade if there be moonlight. The rhyme in this verse, as in one about sixty lines before, has an appearance of affectation. It is, however, imitated from Sir W. Scott, or rather from Claud Halcro—in whose mouth I admired its effect:

“O! were there an island,  
 Tho' ever so wild  
 Where woman might smile, and  
 No man be beguil'd, &c.”

<sup>118</sup> Although Poe's authorship of this poem is disputed by some students of Poe, it is accepted as genuine by most authorities. It was first published in *Scribner's Monthly* for September, 1875. The poem expresses perfectly Poe's realizing sense of the singularity of his temperament and genius.

From the same source I have not taken  
 My sorrow—I could not awaken  
 My heart to joy at the same tone—  
 And all I lov'd—I lov'd alone.  
*Then*—in my childhood—in the dawn  
 Of a most stormy life—was drawn  
 From ev'ry depth of good and ill  
 The mystery which binds me still—  
 From the torrent, or the fountain—  
 From the red cliff of the mountain—  
 From the sun that round me roll'd  
 In its autumn tint of gold—  
 From the lightning in the sky  
 As it pass'd me flying by—  
 From the thunder, and the storm—  
 And the cloud that took the form  
 (When the rest of Heaven was blue)  
 Of a demon in my view.  
 c. 1829 1847

### *To Helen*<sup>119</sup>

Helen, thy beauty is to me  
 Like those *Nicéan* barks of yore,  
 That gently, o'er a perfumed sea,  
 Thy weary, way-worn wanderer bore  
 To his own native shore.  
 On desperate seas long wont to roam,  
 Thy hyacinth hair, thy classic face,  
 Thy Naiad airs have brought me home  
 To the glory that was Greece  
 And the grandeur that was Rome.  
 Lo! in yon brilliant window-niche  
 How statue-like I see thee stand,  
 The agate lamp within thy hand!  
 Ah, Psyche, from the regions which  
 Are Holy Land!  
 1831 1845

<sup>119</sup> "To Helen," the 1845 version of which is here printed, first appeared in the 1831 volume. Said to have been written when Poe was only fourteen (though probably written between 1829 and 1831), it commemorates Poe's grief at the death of Mrs. Jane Stith Stanard, the mother of a boyhood friend of his who died on April 28, 1824.

For the numerous and varying interpretations given to words like *Nicéan* and to other allusions in the poem, the student should consult Campbell's notes. *Nicéan* may refer to the Nyseian isle of Bacchus mentioned by Milton, or, more probably, to *Nicæa*, a city in Asia Minor, commemorated by Catullus.

### *Israfel*<sup>120</sup>

*And the angel Israfel, whose heart-strings are a lute, and who has the sweetest voice of all God's creatures.* KORAN.

In Heaven a spirit doth dwell  
 10 "Whose heart-strings are a lute";  
 None sing so wildly well  
 As the angel Israfel,  
 And the giddy stars (so legends tell),  
 Ceasing their hymns, attend the spell  
 Of his voice, all mute.  
 Tottering above  
 In her highest noon,  
 The enamoured moon 10  
 20 Blushes with love,  
 While, to listen, the red levin  
 (With the rapid Pleiads, even,  
 Which were seven,)  
 Pauses in Heaven.  
 And they say (the starry choir  
 And the other listening things)  
 That Israfeli's fire  
 Is owing to that lyre  
 By which he sits and sings— 20  
 The trembling living wire  
 Of those unusual strings.  
 But the skies that angel trod,  
 Where deep thoughts are a duty,  
 Where Love's a grown-up God,  
 Where the Houri glances are  
 Imbued with all the beauty  
 10 Which we worship in a star.  
 Therefore, thou art not wrong,  
 Israfeli, who despisest 30  
 An unimpassioned song;  
 To thee the laurels belong,  
 Best bard, because the wisest!  
 Merrily live, and long!  
 The ecstasies above  
 With thy burning measures suit—  
 Thy grief, thy joy, thy hate, thy love,

<sup>120</sup> First printed in the 1831 volume; text 1845. The angel Israfel is described in Sale's "Preliminary Discourse" on the Koran as "one of the four angels who stand highest in God's favor as having 'the most melodious voice of all God's creatures.'" [Campbell's note.] The poem as a whole may be regarded as symbolic of Poe's romantic ideal of the poet.



With the fervour of thy lute—  
Well may the stars be mute!

Yes, Heaven is, thine; but this  
Is a world of sweets and sour,  
Our flowers are mercy—flowers,  
And the shadow of thy perfect bliss  
Is the sunshine of ours.

If I could dwell  
Where Israfel  
Hath dwelt, and he where I,  
He might not sing so wildly well  
A mortal melody,

While a bolder note than this might swell  
From my lyre within the sky.

1831

1845

### *The City in the Sea*<sup>121</sup>

Lo! Death has reared himself a throne  
In a strange city lying alone  
Far down within the dim West,  
Where the good and the bad and the worst and  
the best

Have gone to their eternal rest.  
There shrines and palaces and towers  
(Time-eaten towers that tremble not!)  
Resemble nothing that is ours.  
Around, by lifting winds forgot,  
Resignedly beneath the sky  
The melancholy waters lie.

No rays from the holy heaven come down  
On the long night-time of that town;  
But light from out the lurid sea  
Streams up the turrets silently—  
Gleams up the pinnacles far and free—  
Up domes—up spires—up kingly halls—  
Up fanes—up Babylon-like walls—  
Up shadowy long-forgotten bowers  
Of sculptured ivy and stone flowers—  
Up many and many a marvellous shrine  
Whose wreathed friezes intertwine  
The viol, the violet, and the vine.

<sup>121</sup> First printed in 1831, the poem as here reproduced (text of 1845) underwent numerous changes. A study in what Edwin Markham has called "the palpable obscure," this poem is one of a notable group of seven poems in which Poe deals with the world of departed spirits, the others being "Spirits of the Dead," "Al Aaraaf," "Fairy-Land," "The Valley of Unrest," "Sonnet-Silence," and "Dream-Land."

Resignedly beneath the sky  
The melancholy waters lie.  
So blend the turrets and shadows there  
That all seem pendulous in air,  
While from a proud tower in the town  
Death looks gigantically down.

40

There open fanes and gaping graves  
Yawn level with the luminous waves;  
But not the riches there that lie  
In each idol's diamond eye—  
Not the gaily-jewelled dead  
Tempt the waters from their bed;  
For no ripples curl, alas!  
Along that wilderness of glass—  
No swellings tell that winds may be  
Upon some far-off happier sea—  
No heavings hint that winds have been  
On seas less hideously serene.

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But lo, a stir is in the air!  
The wave—there is a movement there!  
As if the towers had thrust aside,  
In slightly sinking, the dull tide—  
As if their tops had feebly given  
A void within the filmy Heaven.  
The waves have now a redder glow—  
The hours are breathing faint and low—  
And when, amid no earthly moans,  
Down, down that town shall settle hence,  
Hell, rising from a thousand thrones,  
Shall do it reverence.

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1831

1845

### *The Sleeper*<sup>122</sup>

At midnight, in the month of June,  
I stand beneath the mystic moon.  
An opiate vapor, dewy, dim,  
Exhales from out her golden rim,  
And softly dripping, drop by drop,

20

<sup>122</sup> First published in the 1831 volume; the text follows the 1845 version. Professor Campbell has observed that "The Sleeper" belongs to the famous group of poems in which Poe treats of the death of a beautiful woman, the others being "Lenore," "To One in Paradise," "The Raven," "Ulalume," and "Annabel Lee." "Tamerlane" and the "Sonnet—To Zanthé" make incidental use of the same theme. It is to be observed, however, that the setting of "The Sleeper" is not the grave or the place of shadows, but of the death-chamber, in which the body has lain for some time, and from which it is soon to be removed for burial. The Sleeper may refer to Mrs. Jane Stith Stanard, Mrs. Frances Allan, or an imaginary woman.

Upon the quiet mountain top,  
 Steals drowsily and musically  
 Into the universal valley.  
 The rosemary nods upon the grave;  
 The lily lolls upon the wave;  
 Wrapping the fog about its breast,  
 The ruin moulders into rest;  
 Looking like Lethe, see! the lake  
 A conscious slumber seems to take,  
 And would not, for the world, awake.  
 All Beauty sleeps!—and lo! where lies  
 Irene, with her Destinies!  
 Oh, lady bright! can it be right—  
 This window open to the night?  
 The wanton airs, from the tree-top,  
 Laughingly through the lattice drop—  
 'The bodiless airs, a wizard rout,  
 Flit through thy chamber in and out,  
 And wave the curtain canopy  
 So fitfully—so fearfully—  
 Above the closed and fringed lid  
 'Neath which thy slumb'ring soul lies hid,  
 That, o'er the floor and down the wall,  
 Like ghosts the shadows rise and fall!  
 Oh, lady dear, hast thou no fear?  
 Why and what art thou dreaming here?  
 Sure thou art come o'er far-off seas,  
 A wonder to these garden trees!  
 Strange is thy pallor! strange thy dress!  
 Strange, above all, thy length of tress,  
 And this all solemn silentness!  
 The lady sleeps! Oh, may her sleep,  
 Which is enduring, so be deep!  
 Heaven have her in its sacred keep!  
 This chamber changed for one more holy,  
 This bed for one more melancholy,  
 I pray to God that she may lie  
 Forever with unopened eye,  
 While the pale sheeted ghosts go by!  
 My love, she sleeps! Oh, may her sleep,  
 As it is lasting, so be deep!  
 Soft may the worms about her creep!  
 Far in the forest, dim and old,  
 For her may some tall vault unfold—  
 Some vault that oft hath flung its black  
 And winged pannels fluttering back,  
 Triumphant, o'er the crested palls  
 Of her grand family funerals—

Some sepulchre, remote, alone,  
 Against whose portal she hath thrown,  
 In childhood, many an idle stone—  
 Some tomb from out whose sounding door  
 10 She ne'er shall force an echo more,  
 Thrilling to think, poor child of sin!  
 It was the dead who groaned within. 60  
 1831 1845

*Lenore*<sup>123</sup>

Ah, broken is the golden bowl!—the spirit flown  
 forever!  
 Let the bell toll!—a saintly soul floats on the Stygian  
 20 river:—  
 And, Guy De Vere, hast *thou* no tear?—weep now  
 or never more!  
 See! on yon drear and rigid bier low lies thy love,  
 Lenore!  
 Come, let the burial rite be read—the funeral song  
 be sung!—  
 An anthem for the queenliest dead that ever died  
 so young—  
 30 A dirge for her the doubly dead in that she died so  
 young.  
 “Wretches! ye loved her for her wealth, and ye  
 hated her for her pride;  
 And, when she fell in feeble health, ye blessed her—  
 that she died:—  
 How *shall* the ritual, then, be read—the requiem  
 how be sung 10  
 By you—by yours, the evil eye,—by yours, the  
 slanderous tongue  
 40 That did to death the innocence that died, and  
 died so young?”  
*Peccavimus*; yet rave not thus! but let a Sabbath song  
 Go up to God so solemnly the dead may feel no  
 wrong!  
 The sweet Lenore hath gone before, with Hope  
 that flew beside,

<sup>123</sup> Originally entitled “A Pæan” in the 1831 collection, the poem was much revised on successive appearances until it received the form (here reproduced) in the *Richmond Whig* for September 18, 1849.

50 Whether the poem refers to Mrs. Stanard, Mrs. Weiss, Mrs. Allan, Miss Royster or to no one in particular is a moot question. The name “Lenore” first appeared in the poem in the 1843 version and was probably suggested to Poe by Bürger, whose ballad “Lenore” has to do with a situation resembling in some respects that of Poe’s poem.

Leaving thee wild for the dear child that should  
 have been thy bride—  
 For her, the fair and debonair, that now so lowly lies,  
 The life upon her yellow hair, but not within her  
 eyes—  
 The life still there upon her hair, the death  
 upon her eyes.  
 “Avaunt!—avaunt! to friends from fiends the  
 indignant ghost is riven—  
 From Hell unto a high estate within the utmost  
 Heaven—  
 From moan and groan to a golden throne beside  
 the King of Heaven:—  
 Let no bell toll, then, lest her soul, amid its  
 hallowed mirth,  
 Should catch the note as it doth float up from  
 the damnéd Earth!  
 And I—to-night my heart is light:—no dirge will  
 I upraise,  
 But waft the angel on her flight with a Pæan of  
 old days!”

1831

1849

### *The Coliseum* <sup>124</sup>

Type <sup>125</sup> of the antique Rome! Rich reliquary  
 Of lofty contemplation left to Time  
 By buried centuries of pomp and power!  
 At length—at length—after so many days  
 Of weary pilgrimage and burning thirst  
 (Thirst for the springs of lore that in thee lie),  
 I kneel, an altered and an humble man,  
 Amid thy shadows, and so drink within  
 My very soul thy grandeur, gloom, and glory!  
 Vastness! and Age! and Memories of Eld!  
 Silence! and Desolation! and dim Night!  
 I feel ye now—I feel ye in your strength—  
 O spells more sure than e’er Judæan king <sup>126</sup>  
 Taught in the gardens of Gethsemane! <sup>127</sup>  
 O charms more potent than the rapt Chaldee <sup>128</sup>  
 Ever drew down from out the quiet stars!

10

<sup>124</sup> This poem was submitted by Poe in the same contest in which “MS. Found in a Bottle” won the prize for the best tale. The poem was adjudged the best, but the judges ruled it out on the ground that both prizes (for verse and prose) should not go to the same man. It first appeared in the *Saturday Visitor* in 1833. The text here followed is that of 1845.

<sup>125</sup> Emblematic.

<sup>126</sup> Jesus Christ.

<sup>127</sup> See Matthew 26:36.

<sup>128</sup> The Chaldeans were famous as astrologers and wizards.

Here, where a hero fell, a column falls!  
 Here, where the mimic eagle glared in gold,  
 A midnight vigil holds the swarthy bat!  
 Here, where the dames of Rome their gilded  
 hair <sup>129</sup> 20  
 Waved to the wind, now wave the reed and thistle!  
 Here, where on golden throne the monarch lolled,  
 Glides, spectre-like, unto his marble home,  
 Lit by the wan light of the hornéd moon,  
 The swift and silent lizard of the stones!  
 But stay! these walls—these ivy-clad arcades—  
 These mouldering plinths—these sad and black-  
 ened shafts—  
 These vague entablatures—this crumbling frieze—  
 These shattered cornices—this wrack—this ruin—  
 These stones—alas! these gray stones—are they  
 all— 30  
 All of the famed and the colossal left  
 By the corrosive Hours to Fate and me?  
 “Not all”—the Echoes answer me—“not all!  
 Prophetic sounds and loud, arise forever  
 From us, and from all Ruin, unto the wise,  
 As melody from Memnon <sup>130</sup> to the Sun.  
 We rule the hearts of mightiest men—we rule  
 With a despotic sway all giant minds.  
 We are not impotent—we pallid stones.  
 Not all our power is gone—not all our fame— 40  
 Not all the magic of our high renown—  
 Not all the wonder that encircles us—  
 Not all the mysteries that in us lie—  
 Not all the memories that hang upon  
 And cling around about us as a garment,  
 Clothing us in a robe of more than glory.”  
 1833 1845

### *To One in Paradise* <sup>131</sup>

Thou wast that all to me, love,  
 For which my soul did pine—  
 A green isle in the sea, love,  
 A fountain and a shrine,

<sup>129</sup> A reference to the gilt wigs worn by fashionable Roman ladies.

<sup>130</sup> A statue at Thebes (erected in honor of Memnon, king of the Ethiopians, made immortal by Zeus), said to emit harplike sounds under the first rays of the sun.

<sup>131</sup> Printed variously from 1834 to 1845, separately and as part of “The Visionary” (later called “The Assignation”), the poem is an elegy upon a false beloved.

All wreathed with fairy fruits and flowers,  
And all the flowers were mine.

Ah, dream too bright to last!  
Ah, starry Hope! that didst arise  
But to be overcast!

A voice from out the Future cries,  
"On! on!"—but o'er the Past  
(Dim gulf!) my spirit hovering lies  
Mute, motionless, aghast!

For, alas! alas! with me  
The light of Life is o'er!  
No more—no more—no more—  
(Such language holds the solemn sea  
To the sands upon the shore)  
Shall bloom the thunder-blasted tree,  
Or the stricken eagle soar!

And all my days are trances,  
And all my nightly dreams  
Are where thy grey eye glances,  
And where thy footstep gleams—  
In what ethereal dances,  
By what eternal streams.  
1833

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1845

### *Dream-Land*<sup>132</sup>

By a route obscure and lonely,  
Haunted by ill angels only,  
Where an Eidolon,<sup>133</sup> named NIGHT,  
On a black throne reigns upright,  
I have reached these lands but newly  
From an ultimate dim Thule<sup>134</sup>—  
From a wild weird clime that lieth, sublime,  
Out of SPACE—out of TIME.

Bottomless vales and boundless floods,  
And chasms, and caves, and Titan woods,  
With forms that no man can discover  
For the tears that drip all over;  
Mountains toppling evermore  
Into seas without a shore;  
Seas that restlessly aspire,

10

Surging, unto skies of fire;  
Lakes that endlessly outspread  
Their lone waters, lone and dead,—  
Their still waters, still and chilly  
With the snows of the lolling lily.

20

By the lakes that thus outspread  
Their lone waters, lone and dead,—  
Their sad waters, sad and chilly  
With the snows of the lolling lily,—  
By the mountains—near the river  
Murmuring lowly, murmuring ever,—  
By the grey woods,—by the swamp  
Where the toad and the newt encamp,—

By the dismal tarns and pools  
Where dwell the Ghouls,—  
By each spot the most unholy—  
In each nook most melancholy,—  
There the traveller meets, aghast,  
Shed Memories of the Past—  
Shrouded forms that start and sigh  
As they pass the wanderer by—  
White-robed forms of friends long given,  
In agony, to the Earth—and Heaven.

30

For the heart whose woes are legion  
'T is a peaceful, soothing region—  
For the spirit that walks in shadow  
'T is—oh, 't is an Eldorado!  
But the traveller, travelling through it,  
May not—dare not openly view it;  
Never its mysteries are exposed  
To the weak human eye unclosed;  
So wills its King, who hath forbid  
The uplifting of the fringed lid;  
And thus the sad Soul that here passes  
Beholds it but through darkened glasses.

40

50

By a route obscure and lonely,  
Haunted by ill angels only,  
Where an Eidolon, named NIGHT,  
On a black throne reigns upright,  
I have wandered home but newly  
From this ultimate dim Thule.

1844

1845

<sup>132</sup> Poe's latest style—typified by "The Raven" and "Ulalume"—is formally introduced in this lyric, written c. 1844. The text is that of 1845.

<sup>133</sup> Apparently a personification of Night as symbolic of Death.

<sup>134</sup> An island in the German Ocean, considered by the ancients the most northerly point on the earth.

*The Raven* <sup>135</sup>

Once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered,  
weak and weary,  
Over many a quaint and curious volume of for-  
gotten lore—

While I nodded, nearly napping, suddenly there  
came a tapping,

As of some one gently rapping, rapping at my  
chamber door.

"'T is some visitor," I muttered, "tapping at my  
chamber door—

Only this and nothing more."

Ah, distinctly I remember it was in the bleak  
December;

And each separate dying ember wrought its  
ghost upon the floor.

Eagerly I wished the morrow;—vainly I had  
sought to borrow

From my books surcease of sorrow—sorrow for  
the lost Lenore—

For the rare and radiant maiden whom the  
angels name Lenore—

Nameless *here* for evermore.

And the silken, sad, uncertain rustling of each  
purple curtain

Thrilled me—filled me with fantastic terrors  
never felt before;

So that now, to still the beating of my heart, I  
stood repeating,

"'T is some visitor entreating entrance at my  
chamber door—

Some late visitor entreating entrance at my  
chamber door;—

This it is and nothing more."

Presently my soul grew stronger; hesitating then  
no longer,

"Sir," said I, "or Madam, truly your forgiveness  
I implore;

20

<sup>135</sup> First printed in the New York *Evening Post* for January 29, 1845. It appeared in sixteen different versions. The text here reproduced is that of Poe's latest revision as it appeared in the Richmond *Examiner* for September 25, 1849.

Although Poe claimed that he wrote "The Raven" ten years before it was first printed, there is good reason for believing that it was not written before 1842. Dr. Campbell believes that Poe worked at it during 1843-44, and that it was not completed before the middle of 1844.

The student, reading "The Philosophy of Composition," will ponder the question whether the poem was composed in the manner indicated by Poe in that essay.

But the fact is I was napping, and so gently you  
came rapping,

And so faintly you came tapping, tapping at my  
chamber door,

That I scarce was sure I heard you"—here I  
opened wide the door;—

Darkness there and nothing more.

Deep into that darkness peering, long I stood  
there wondering, fearing,

Doubting, dreaming dreams no mortal ever dared  
to dream before;

But the silence was unbroken, and the stillness  
gave no token,

And the only word there spoken was the whispered  
word, "Lenore?"

This I whispered, and an echo murmured back  
the word, "Lenore!"

Merely this and nothing more.

30

Back into the chamber turning, all my soul  
within me burning,

10 Soon again I heard a tapping somewhat louder  
than before.

"Surely," said I, "surely that is something at my  
window lattic;

Let me see, then, what thereat is, and this mystery  
explore—

Let my heart be still a moment and this mystery  
explore;—

'T is the wind and nothing more!"

Open here I flung the shutter, when, with many  
a flirt and flutter,

In there stepped a stately Raven of the saintly  
days of yore;

Not the least obeisance made he; not a minute  
stopped or stayed he;

But, with mien of lord or lady, perched above my  
chamber door—

Perched upon a bust of Pallas <sup>136</sup> just above my  
chamber door—

40

Perched, and sat, and nothing more.

Then this ebony bird beguiling my sad fancy into  
smiling,

By the grave and stern decorum of the coun-  
tenance it wore,

"Though thy crest be shorn and shaven, thou,"

I said, "art sure no craven,

<sup>136</sup> Pallas Athene, goddess of wisdom.

Ghastly grim and ancient Raven wandering from  
the Nightly shore—  
Tell me what thy lordly name is on the Night's  
Plutonian <sup>137</sup> shore!"

Quoth the Raven, "Nevermore."

Much I marvelled this ungainly fowl to hear  
discourse so plainly,  
Though its answer little meaning—little relevancy  
bore; 50  
For we cannot help agreeing that no living human  
being  
Ever yet was blessed with seeing bird above his  
chamber door—  
Bird or beast upon the sculptured bust above his  
chamber door,  
With such name as "Nevermore."

But the Raven, sitting lonely on the placid bust,  
spoke only  
That one word, as if his soul in that one word  
he did outpour.  
Nothing farther then he uttered—not a feather  
then he fluttered—  
Till I scarcely more than muttered, "Other friends  
have flown before—  
On the morrow *he* will leave me, as my Hopes  
have flown before."  
Then the bird said, "Nevermore." 60

Startled at the stillness broken by reply so aptly  
spoken,  
"Doubtless," said I, "what it utters is its only  
stock and store  
Caught from some unhappy master whom un-  
merciful Disaster  
Followed fast and followed faster till his songs  
one burden bore—  
Till the dirges of his Hope that melancholy burden  
bore  
Of 'Never—nevermore.' "

But the Raven still beguiling my sad fancy into  
smiling,  
Straight I wheeled a cushioned seat in front of  
bird and bust and door;  
Then, upon the velvet sinking, I betook myself  
to linking  
Fancy unto fancy, thinking what this ominous  
bird of yore— 70

<sup>137</sup> Pluto was the god of Hades.

What this grim, ungainly, ghastly, gaunt, and  
ominous bird of yore  
Meant in croaking "Nevermore."

This I sat engaged in guessing, but no syllable  
expressing  
To the fowl whose fiery eyes now burned into  
by bosom's core;  
This and more I sat divining, with my head at  
case reclining  
On the cushion's velvet lining that the lamp-light  
gloated o'er,  
But whose velvet-violet lining with the lamp-light  
gloating o'er,  
*She* shall press, ah, nevermore!

Then, methought, the air grew denser, perfumed  
from an unseen censer  
Swung by seraphim whose foot-falls tinkled on  
the tufted floor. 80  
"Wretch," I cried, "thy God hath lent thee—  
by these angels he hath sent thee  
Respite—respite and nepenthe <sup>138</sup> from thy  
memories of Lenore;  
Quaff, oh, quaff this kind nepenthe and forget  
this lost Lenore!"  
Quoth the Raven, "Nevermore."

"Prophet!" said I, "thing of evil!—prophet still,  
if bird or devil!—  
Whether Tempter sent, or whether tempest tossed  
thee here ashore,  
Desolate yet all undaunted, on this desert land  
enchanted—  
On this home by Horror haunted—tell me truly,  
I implore—  
Is there—is there balm in Gilead? <sup>139</sup>—tell me—  
tell me, I implore!"  
Quoth the Raven, "Nevermore." 90

"Prophet!" said I, "thing of evil!—prophet still,  
if bird or devil!  
By that Heaven that bends above us—by that  
God we both adore—  
Tell this soul with sorrow laden if, within the  
distant Aidenn, <sup>140</sup>  
It shall clasp a sainted maiden whom the angels  
name Lenore—

<sup>138</sup> A sorrow-banishing drink. See *Odyssey*, iv, 419-430, and Milton's *Comus*, ll. 675-676.

<sup>139</sup> See Jeremiah 8:22.

<sup>140</sup> A place of pleasure, variant for Eden or Aden.

Clasp a rare and radiant maiden whom the angels  
name Lenore."

Quoth the Raven, "Nevermore."

"Be that word our sign of parting, bird or fiend!"

I shrieked, upstarting—

"Get thee back into the tempest and the Night's  
Plutonian shore!

Leave no black plume as a token of that lie thy  
soul hath spoken!

Leave my loneliness unbroken!—quit the bust  
above my door! 100

Take thy beak from out my heart, and take thy  
form from off my door!"

Quote the Raven, "Nevermore."

And the Raven, never flitting, still is sitting, *still*  
is sitting

On the pallid bust of Pallas just above my  
chamber door;

And his eyes have all the seeming of a demon's  
that is dreaming,

And the lamp-light o'er him streaming throws his  
shadow<sup>141</sup> on the floor;

And my soul from out that shadow that lies  
floating on the floor

Shall be lifted—nevermore!

c. 1845

1849

### *Ulalume—A Ballad*<sup>142</sup>

The skies they were ashen and sober;

The leaves they were crisped and sere—

The leaves they were withering and sere:

It was night, in the lonesome October

Of my most immemorial year:<sup>143</sup>

It was hard by the dim lake of Auber,<sup>144</sup>

In the misty mid region of Weir<sup>145</sup>—

<sup>141</sup> Poe justified this detail by saying, "For the purposes of poetry it is quite sufficient that a thing is possible, or at least that the improbability be not offensively glaring. It is true that in several ways . . . the lamp might have thrown the bird's shadow on the floor. My conception was that of the bracket candelabrum affixed against the wall, high up above the door and bust."

<sup>142</sup> For the involved question of whether this poem was composed before or after the death of Poe's wife (January 30, 1847), see Killis Campbell's excellent note, *Poems* (Boston, 1927), 265-269. For the varying interpretations see *ibid.*, 269-272

<sup>143</sup> Presumably either 1846 or 1847.

<sup>144</sup> Doubtless a word coined by Poe for its effect. The word rhymes with "October."

<sup>145</sup> Like "Auber," a myth-name.

It was down by the dank tarn of Auber,  
In the ghoul-haunted woodland of Weir.

Here once, through an alley Titanic, 10

Of cypress,<sup>146</sup> I roamed with my Soul—

Of cypress, with Psyche, my Soul.

These were days when my heart was volcanic

As the scoriac<sup>147</sup> rivers that roll—

As the lavas that restlessly roll

Their sulphurous currents down Yaanek<sup>148</sup>

In the ultimate climes of the Pole—

That groan as they roll down Mount Yaanek

In the realms of the Boreal<sup>149</sup> Pole.

Our talk had been serious and sober, 20

But our thoughts they were palsied and sere—

Our memories were treacherous and sere;

For we knew not the month was October,

And we marked not the night of the year

(Ah, night of all nights in the year!)—

We noted not the dim lake of Auber

(Though once we had journeyed down here)—

We remembered not the dank tarn of Auber,

Nor the ghoul-haunted woodland of Weir.

And now, as the night was senescent 30

And star-dials pointed to morn—

As the star-dials hinted of morn—

At the end of our path a liquescent

And nebulous lustre was born,

Out of which a miraculous crescent

Arose with a duplicate horn—

Astarte's bediamonded crescent<sup>150</sup>

Distinct with its duplicate horn.

And I said: "She is warmer than Dian;<sup>151</sup>

She rolls through an ether of sighs— 40

She revels in a region of sighs.<sup>152</sup>

She has seen that the tears are not dry on<sup>153</sup>

These cheeks, where the worm never dies,<sup>154</sup>

<sup>146</sup> A tree commonly associated with graveyards.

<sup>147</sup> Volcanic, harking back to *ashen*, *crisped*, and *sere*.

<sup>148</sup> Another myth-name.

<sup>149</sup> Northern, suggesting at once the blighting cold and the burning brightness of the aurora borealis.

<sup>150</sup> The reference, says Professor Campbell, is to the planet Venus, which in some of its phases assumes the appearance of a crescent.

<sup>151</sup> With the Phoenicians, Astarte was the goddess of love and the counterpart of Baal. Diana, among the Romans, was the chaste goddess of the moon. [Campbell's note.]

<sup>152</sup> An unusually lame line for Poe's later years.

<sup>153</sup> "Dry on," rhyming with "Lion," has been criticized as "truly an exhaustion of ingenuity."

<sup>154</sup> See Isaiah, lxvi:24.

And has come past the stars of the Lion,  
 To point us the path to the skies—  
 To the Lethcan peace of the skies—  
 Come up, in despite of the Lion,  
 To shine on us with her bright eyes—  
 Come up through the lair of the Lion,  
 With love in her luminous eyes.”

But Psyche, uplifting her finger,  
 Said: “Sadly this star I mistrust—  
 Her pallor I strangely mistrust:  
 Ah, hasten!—ah, let us not linger!  
 Ah, fly!—let us fly!—for we must.”

In terror she spoke, letting sink her  
 Wings till they trailed in the dust—  
 In agony sobbed, letting sink her  
 Plumes till they trailed in the dust—  
 Till they sorrowfully trailed in the dust.

I replied: “This is nothing but dreaming:  
 Let us on by this tremulous light!  
 Let us bathe in this crystalline light!  
 Its Sibyllic <sup>155</sup> splendor is beaming  
 With Hope and in Beauty to-night:—  
 See!—it flickers up the sky through the night!  
 Ah, we safely may trust to its gleaming,  
 And be sure it will lead us aright—  
 We surely may trust to a gleaming,  
 That cannot but guide us aright,  
 Since it flickers up to Heaven through the  
 night.”

Thus I pacified Psyche and kissed her,  
 And tempted her out of her gloom—  
 And conquered her scruples and gloom;  
 And we passed to the end of the vista,  
 But were stopped by the door of a tomb—  
 By the door of a legended tomb;  
 And I said: “What is written, sweet sister,  
 On the door of this legended tomb?”  
 She replied: “Ulalume—Ulalume!—  
 ’T is the vault of thy lost Ulalume!”

Then my heart it grew ashen and sober  
 As the leaves that were crisped and sere—  
 As the leaves that were withering and sere;  
 And I cried: “It was surely October  
 On *this* very night of last year  
 That I journeyed—I journeyed down here!—  
 That I brought a dread burden down here—

<sup>155</sup> Oracular.

On this night of all nights in the year,  
 Ah, what demon hath tempted me here? 90  
 Well I know, now, this dim lake of Auber—  
 This misty mid region of Weir—  
 Well I know, now, this dank tarn of Auber,  
 This ghoul-haunted woodland of Weir.”

50 Said we, then—the two, then: “Ah, can it  
 Have been that the woodlandish ghouls—  
 The pitiful, the merciful ghouls—  
 To bar up our way and to ban it  
 From the secret that lies in these wolds—  
 From the thing that lies hidden in these  
 wolds— 100  
 Have drawn up the spectre of a planet  
 From the limbo of lunar souls—  
 This sinfully scintillant planet  
 60 From the Hell of the planetary souls?”  
 1847 1849

### *The Bells* <sup>156</sup>

#### I

Hear the sledges with the bells—  
 Silver bells!  
 What a world of merriment their melody foretells!  
 How they tinkle, tinkle, tinkle,  
 In the icy air of night!  
 While the stars that oversprinkle  
 All the heavens, seem to twinkle  
 With a crystalline delight;  
 Keeping time, time, time,  
 In a sort of Runic rhyme, 10  
 To the tintinnabulation <sup>157</sup> that so musically wells  
 From the bells, bells, bells, bells,  
 Bells, bells, bells—  
 From the jingling and the tinkling of the bells.

#### II

Hear the mellow wedding bells—  
 Golden bells!

<sup>156</sup> Although the idea for this poem had been vaguely germinating in Poe's mind for several years, it was not committed to writing until the summer of 1848. A second draft was written on February 6, 1849. After further revisions, a fourth draft was printed in the *Union Magazine* in November, 1849.

<sup>157</sup> “Tintinnabulation,” doubtless a coinage of Poe's out of the Latin *tintinnabulum* is only one instance among many in this poem of Poe's ingenuity at creating onomatopoeic effects. The *Oxford English Dictionary* does not record an earlier use of the word.



What a world of happiness their harmony foretells!  
Through the balmy air of night  
How they ring out their delight!—

From the molten-golden notes, 20  
And all in tune,  
What a liquid ditty floats

To the turtle-dove that listens, while she gloats  
On the moon!

Oh, from out the sounding cells,  
What a gush of euphony voluminously wells!

How it swells!

How it dwells

On the Future!—how it tells

Of the rapture that impels 30

To the swinging and the ringing

Of the bells, bells, bells,—

Of the bells, bells, bells, bells,

Bells, bells, bells—

To the rhyming and the chiming of the bells!

## III

Hear the loud alarum bells—

Brazen bells!

What a tale of terror, now, their turbulency tells!

In the startled ear of night

How they scream out their affright! 40

Too much horrified to speak,

They can only shriek, shriek,

Out of tune,

In a clamorous appealing to the mercy of the fire,

In a mad expostulation with the deaf and frantic  
fire,

Leaping higher, higher, higher,

With a desperate desire,

And a resolute endeavor

Now—now to sit, or never,

By the side of the pale-faced moon. 50

Oh, the bells, bells, bells!

What a tale their terror tells

Of Despair!

How they clang, and clash, and roar!

What a horror they outpour

On the bosom of the palpitating air!

Yet the ear, it fully knows,

By the twanging

And the clanging,

How the danger ebbs and flows; 60

Yet the ear distinctly tells,

In the jangling

And the wrangling,

How the danger sinks and swells,

By the sinking or the swelling in the anger of the  
bells—

Of the bells,—

Of the bells, bells, bells, bells,

Bells, bells, bells—

In the clamor and the clangor of the bells!

## IV

Hear the tolling of the bells 70

Iron bells!

What a world of solemn thought their monody  
compels!

In the silence of the night,

How we shiver with affright

At the melancholy menace of their tone!

For every sound that floats

From the rust within their throats

Is a groan.

And the people—ah, the people—

They that dwell up in the steeple, 80

All alone,

And who tolling, tolling, tolling,

In that muffled monotone,

Feel a glory in so rolling

On the human heart a stone—

They are neither man nor woman—

They are neither brute nor human—

They are Ghouls:—

And their king it is who tolls:—

And he rolls, rolls, rolls, 90

Rolls

A pæan from the bells!

And his merry bosom swells

With the pæan of the bells!

And he dances, and he yells;

Keeping time, time, time,

In a sort of Runic rhyme,

To the pæan of the bells—

Of the bells:—

Keeping time, time, time, 100

In a sort of Runic rhyme,

To the throbbing of the bells—

Of the bells, bells, bells—

To the sobbing of the bells;

Keeping time, time, time,

As he knells, knells, knells,

In a happy Runic rhyme,  
 To the rolling of the bells—  
 Of the bells, bells, bells:—  
 To the tolling of the bells— 110  
 Of the bells, bells, bells, bells,  
 Bells, bells, bells—  
 To the moaning and the groaning of the bells.  
 1848 1849

*To My Mother* 158

Because I feel that, in the Heavens above,  
 The angels, whispering to one another,  
 Can find, among their burning terms of love,  
 None so devotional as that of "Mother,"  
 Therefore by that dear name I long have called  
 you—  
 You who are more than mother unto me,  
 And fill my heart of hearts, where Death installed  
 you  
 In setting my Virginia's spirit free.  
 My mother—my own mother, who died early,  
 Was but the mother of myself; but you 10  
 Are mother to the one I loved so dearly,  
 And thus are dearer than the mother I knew  
 By that infinity with which my wife  
 Was dearer to my soul than its soul-life.  
 1849 1850

*For Annie* 159

Thank Heaven! the crisis,  
 The danger is past,  
 And the lingering illness  
 Is over at last—  
 And the fever called "Living"  
 Is conquered at last.  
 Sadly, I know  
 I am shorn of my strength,  
 And no muscle I move  
 As I lie at full length— 10

<sup>158</sup> The subject and inspiration of this poem is Poe's aunt and mother-in-law, Mrs. Maria Clemm.

<sup>159</sup> Annie was Mrs. Annie Richmond of Lowell, Mass., for whom he avowed a warm friendship following their meeting in the fall of 1848. Comments on this poem vary from G. E. Woodberry's calling it "The ghoulis lines 'For Annie,'" to Poe's own judgment, "I think the lines 'For Annie' . . . much the best I have ever written."

But no matter!—I feel  
 I am better at length.  
 And I rest so composedly,  
 Now, in my bed,  
 That any beholder  
 Might fancy me dead—  
 Might start at beholding me,  
 Thinking me dead.  
 The moaning and groaning,  
 The sighing and sobbing,  
 Are quieted now,  
 With that horrible throbbing  
 At heart:—ah, that horrible,  
 Horrible throbbing!  
 The sickness—the nausea—  
 The pitiless pain—  
 Have ceased, with the fever  
 That maddened my brain—  
 With the fever called "Living"  
 That burned in my brain. 20  
 And oh! of all tortures  
 That torture the worst  
 Has abated—the terrible  
 Torture of thirst  
 For the naphthaline river  
 Of Passion accurst:—  
 I have drank of a water  
 That quenches all thirst:—  
 Of a water that flows,  
 With a lullaby sound, 40  
 From a spring but a very few  
 Feet under ground—  
 From a cavern not very far  
 Down under ground.  
 And ah! let it never  
 Be foolishly said  
 That my room it is gloomy  
 And narrow my bed;  
 For man never slept  
 In a different bed— 50  
 And, to *sleep*, you must slumber  
 In just such a bed.  
 My tantalized spirit  
 Here blandly reposes,  
 Forgetting, or never  
 Regretting, its roses—

Its old agitations

Of myrtles and roses:

For now, while so quietly

Lying, it fancies

A holier odor

About it, of pansies—

A rosemary odor,

Commingle with pansies—

With rue and the beautiful

Puritan pansies.

And so it lies happily,

Bathing in many

A dream of the truth

And the beauty of Annie—

Drowned in a bath

Of the tresses of Annie.

She tenderly kissed me,

She fondly caressed,

And then I fell gently

To sleep on her breast—

Deeply to sleep

From the heaven of her breast.

When the light was extinguished,

She covered me warm,

And she prayed to the angels

To keep me from harm—

To the queen of the angels

To shield me from harm.

And I lie so composedly,

Now, in my bed

(Knowing her love),

That you fancy me dead—

And I rest so contentedly,

Now, in my bed

(With her love at my breast),

That you fancy me dead—

That you shudder to look at me,

Thinking me dead:—

But my heart it is brighter

Than all of the many

Stars in the sky,

For it sparkles with Annie—

It glows with the light

Of the love of my Annie—

With the thought of the light

Of the eyes of my Annie.

1849

*Annabel Lee* <sup>160</sup>

It was many and many a year ago,

60 In a kingdom by the sea,

That a maiden there lived whom you may know

By the name of Annabel Lee;—

And this maiden she lived with no other thought

Than to love and be loved by me.

*She* was a child and *I* was a child,

In this kingdom by the sea,

But we loved with a love that was more than

love—

I and my Annabel Lee—

70 With a love that the wingéd seraphs of Heaven

Coveted her and me.

And this was the reason, that, long ago,

In this kingdom by the sea,

A wind blew out of a cloud by night

Chilling my Annabel Lee;

So that her highborn kinsmen came

And bore her away from me,

To shut her up in a sepulchre

In this kingdom by the sea.

80

The angels, not half so happy in Heaven,

Went envying her and me:—

Yes! that was the reason (as all men know,

In this kingdom by the sea)

That the wind came out of the cloud, chilling

And killing my Annabel Lee.

But our love it was stronger by far than the love

Of those who were older than we—

Of many far wiser than we—

90 And neither the angels in Heaven above

Nor the demons down under the sea,

Can ever dissever my soul from the soul

Of the beautiful Annabel Lee:—

For the moon never beams without bringing me  
dreams

Of the beautiful Annabel Lee;

And the stars never rise but I see the bright eyes

Of the beautiful Annabel Lee;

100

<sup>160</sup> Published in the *New York Tribune*, October 9, 1849, two days after Poe's death. A number of different ladies have been suggested as having inspired the poem. The usual interpretation is that whether it was inspired by his wife or not, the poem is (in the words of Professor Hardin Craig) "expressive of grief at bereavement as that grief may be sublimated by the recollection of true love and unforgettable beauty."

1850

And so, all the night-tide, I lie down by the side  
 Of my darling, my darling, my life and my bride,  
     In her sepulchre there by the sea— 40  
     In her tomb by the side of the sea.  
 1849 1849

*Eldorado* <sup>161</sup>

Gaily bedight,  
 A gallant knight,  
 In sunshine and in shadow,  
 Had journeyed long,  
 Singing a song,  
 In search of Eldorado.  
 But he grew old—  
 This knight so bold—

And o'er his heart a shadow  
 Fell as he found 10  
 No spot of ground  
 That looked like Eldorado.

And, as his strength  
 Failed him at length,  
 He met a pilgrim shadow—  
 "Shadow," said he,  
 "Where can it be—  
 This land of Eldorado?"

"Over the Mountains  
 Of the Moon, 20  
 Down the Valley of the Shadow,  
 Ride, boldly ride,"  
 The shade replied,—  
 "If you seek for Eldorado!"

1849 1849

*Ballads and Other Poems* <sup>162</sup>

By Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, author of "Voices of the Night," "Hyperion," &c. Second Edition. John Owen: Cambridge.

In our last number we had some hasty observations on these "Ballads"—observations which we now propose, in some measure, to amplify and explain.

It may be remembered that, among other points, we demurred to Mr. Longfellow's *theses*, or rather to 10 their general character. We found fault with the too obtrusive nature of their *didacticism*. Some years ago we urged a similar objection to one or two of the longer pieces of Bryant; and neither time nor reflection has sufficed to modify, in the slightest particular, our convictions upon this topic.

We have said that Mr. Longfellow's conception of the *aims* of poesy is erroneous; and that thus, laboring at a disadvantage, he does violent wrong to his own high powers; and now the question is, what *are* 20 his ideas of the aims of the Muse, as we gather these ideas from the *general* tendency of his poems? It will be at once evident that, imbued with the peculiar

spirit of German song (a pure conventionality) he regards the inculcation of a *moral* as essential. Here we find it necessary to repeat that we have reference only to the *general* tendency of his compositions; for there are some magnificent exceptions, where, as if by accident, he has permitted his genius to get the better of his conventional prejudice. But didacticism is the prevalent *tone* of his song. His invention, his imagery, his all, is made subservient to the elucidation of some one or more points (but rarely of more than one) which he looks upon as *truth*. And that this mode of procedure will find stern defenders should never excite surprise, so long as the world is full to overflowing with cant and conventicles. There are men who will scramble on all fours through the muddiest sloughs of vice to pick up a single apple of virtue. There are things called men who, so long as the sun rolls, will greet with snuffing huzzas every figure that takes upon itself the semblance of truth, even although the figure, in itself only a "stuffed Paddy," <sup>163</sup> be as much out of place as a toga on the statue of Washington, or out of season as rabbits in the days of the dog-star.

Now with as deep a reverence for "the true" as

<sup>161</sup> Probably inspired by the gold-rush of 1849, the rewards of which held no fascination for Poe since his life was dedicated to art and beauty, the poem is rather a farewell poem of the order of Lanier's "Stirrup Cup," Emerson's "Terminus," or Longfellow's "Bells of San Blas."

<sup>162</sup> Published in *Graham's Magazine*, April, 1842.

<sup>163</sup> Probably slang of the day for "man of straw" or some similar expression.

ever inspired the bosom of mortal man, we would limit, in many respects, its modes of inculcation. We would limit to enforce them. We would not render them impotent by dissipation. The demands of truth are severe. She has no sympathy with the myrtles. All that is indispensable in song is all with which she has nothing to do. To deck her in gay robes is to render her a harlot. It is but making her a flaunting paradox to wreath her in gems and flowers. Even in stating this our present proposition, 10 we verify our own words—we feel the necessity, in enforcing this *truth*, of descending from metaphor. Let us then be simple and distinct. To convey “the true” we are required to dismiss from the attention all inessentials. We must be perspicuous, precise, terse. We need concentration rather than expansion of mind. We must be calm, unimpassioned, unexcited—in a word, we must be in that peculiar mood which, as nearly as possible, is the exact converse of the poetical. He must be blind indeed who cannot 20 perceive the radical and chasmal difference between the truthful and the poetical modes of inculcation. He must be grossly wedded to conventionalisms who, in spite of this difference, shall still attempt to reconcile the obstinate oils and waters of Poetry and Truth.

Dividing the world of mind into its most obvious and immediately recognisable distinctions, we have the pure intellect, taste, and the moral sense. We place *taste* between the intellect and the moral sense, 30 because it is just this intermediate space which, in the mind, it occupies. It is the connecting link in the triple chain.

It serves to sustain a mutual intelligence between the extremes. It appertains, in strict appreciation, to the former, but is distinguished from the latter by so faint a difference, that Aristotle has not hesitated to class some of its operations among the Virtues themselves. But the *offices* of the trio are broadly marked. Just as conscience, or the moral sense, recognises 40 duty; just as the intellect deals with *truth*; so is it the part of taste alone to inform us of *BEAUTY*. And Poesy is the handmaiden but of Taste. Yet we would not be misunderstood. This handmaiden is not forbidden to moralise—in her own fashion. She is not forbidden to depict—but to reason and preach, of virtue. As, of this latter, conscience recognises the obligation, so intellect teaches the expediency, while taste contents herself with displaying the beauty:

waging war with vice merely on the ground of its inconsistency with fitness, harmony, proportion—in a words with τὸ καλόν.<sup>164</sup>

An important condition of man's immortal nature is thus, plainly, the sense of the Beautiful. This it is which ministers to his delight in the manifold forms and colors and sounds and sentiments amid which he exists. And, just as the eyes of Amaryllis are repeated in the mirror, or the living lily in the lake, so is the mere *record* of these forms and colors and sounds and sentiments—so is their mere oral or written repetition a duplicate source of delight. But this repetition is not Poesy. He who shall merely sing with whatever rapture, in however harmonious strains, or with however vivid a truth of imitation, of the sights and sounds which greet him in common with all mankind—he, we say, has yet failed to prove his divine title. There is still a longing unsatisfied, which he has been impotent to fulfil. There is still a thirst unquenchable, which to allay he has shown us no crystal springs. This burning thirst belongs to the *immortal* essence of man's nature. It is equally a consequence and an indication of his perennial life. It is the desire of the moth for the star. It is not the mere appreciation of the beauty before us. It is a wild effort to reach the beauty above. It is a forethought of the loveliness to come. It is a passion to be satiated by no sublunary sights, or sounds, or sentiments, and the soul thus athirst strives to allay its fever in futile efforts at *creation*. Inspired with a prescient ecstasy of the beauty beyond the grave, it struggles by multi-form novelty of combination among the things and thoughts of Time, to anticipate some portion of that loveliness whose very elements, perhaps, appertain solely to Eternity. And the result of such effort, on the part of souls fittingly constituted, is alone what mankind have agreed to denominate Poetry.

We say this with little fear of contradiction. Yet the spirit of our assertion must be more heeded than the letter. Mankind have *seemed* to define Poesy in a thousand, and in a thousand conflicting definitions. But the war is one only of words. Induction is as well applicable to this subject as to the most palpable and utilitarian; and by its sober processes we find that, in respect to compositions which have been really received as poems, the *imaginative*, or, more popularly, the creative portions *alone* have ensured them to be so received. Yet these works, on account

<sup>164</sup> The beautiful, or harmonious.

of these portions, having once been so received, and so named, it has happened, naturally and inevitably, that other portions totally unpoetic have not only come to be regarded by the popular voice as poetic, but have been made to serve as false standards of perfection, in the adjustment of other poetical claims. Whatever has been found in whatever has been received as a poem, has been blindly regarded as *ex statu* poetic. And this is a species of gross error which scarcely could have made its way into any less intangible topic. In fact that license which appertains to the Muse herself, it has been thought decorous, if not sagacious to indulge, in all examination of her character.

Poesy is thus seen to be a response—unsatisfactory it is true—but still in some measure a response, to a natural and irrepressible demand. Man being what he is, the time could never have been in which Poesy was not. Its first element is the thirst for supernal BEAUTY—a beauty which is not afforded the soul by any existing collocation of earth's forms—a beauty which, perhaps, *no possible* combination of these forms would fully produce. Its second element is the attempt to satisfy this thirst by *novel* combinations, of those combinations which our predecessors, toiling in chase of the same phantom, have already set in order. We thus clearly deduce the novelty, the originality, the invention, the imagination, or lastly the creation of BEAUTY, (for the terms as here employed are synonymous) as the essence of all Poesy. Nor is this idea so much at variance with ordinary opinion as, at first sight, it may appear. A multitude of antique dogmas on this topic will be found, when divested of extrinsic speculation, to be easily resolvable into the definition now proposed. We do nothing more than present tangibly the vague clouds of the world's idea. We recognise the idea itself floating, unsettled, indefinite, in every attempt which has yet been made to circumscribe the conception of "Poesy" in words. A striking instance of this is observable in the fact that no definition exists, in which either "the beautiful," or some one of those qualities which we have above designated synonymously with "creation," has not been pointed out as the *chief* attribute of the Muse. "Invention," however, or "imagination," is by far more commonly insisted upon. The word *ποίησις* itself (creation) speaks volumes upon this point. Neither will it be amiss here to mention Count Bielfeld's definition of

poetry, as "*L'art d'exprimer les pensées par la fiction.*"<sup>165</sup> With this definition (of which the philosophy is profound to a certain extent) the German terms *Dichtkunst*, the art of fiction, and *Dichten*, to feign, which are used for "poetry" and "to make verses," are in full and remarkable accordance. It is, nevertheless, in the combination of the two omniprevalent ideas that the novelty and, we believe, the force of our own proposition is to be found.

So far, we have spoken of Poesy as of an abstraction alone. As such, it is obvious that it may be applicable in various moods. The sentiment may develop itself in Sculpture, in Painting, in Music, or otherwise. But our present business is with its development in words—that development to which, in practical acceptance, the world has agreed to limit the term. And at this point there is one consideration which induces us to pause. We cannot make up our minds to admit (as some have admitted) the inessentiality of rhythm. On the contrary, the universality of its use in the earliest poetical efforts of mankind would be sufficient to assure us, not merely of its congeniality with the Muse, or of its adaptation to her purposes, but of its elementary and indispensable importance. But here we must, perforce, content ourselves with mere suggestion; for this topic is of a character which would lead us too far. We have already spoken of Music as one of the moods of poetical development. It is in Music, perhaps, that the soul most nearly attains that end upon which we have commented—the creation of supernal beauty. It may be, indeed, that this august aim is here even partially or imperfectly attained, *in fact*. The elements of that beauty which is felt in sound, *may be* the mutual or common heritage of Earth and Heaven. In the soul's struggles at combinations it is thus not impossible that a harp may strike notes not unfamiliar to the angels. And in this view the wonder may well be less that all attempts at defining the character or sentiment of the deeper musical impressions have been found absolutely futile. Contenting ourselves, therefore, with the firm conviction, that music (in its modifications of rhythm and rhyme) is of so vast a moment in Poesy, as *never* to be neglected by him who is truly poetical—is of so mighty a force in furthering the great aim intended that he

<sup>165</sup> This definition ("Art is the expression of ideas by means of fiction") is found in Bielfeld's *Elements of Universal Erudition* (London, 1770), II, 194.

is mad who rejects its assistance—content with this idea we shall not pause to maintain its absolute essentiality, for the mere sake of rounding a definition. We will but add, at this point, that the highest possible development of the Poetical Sentiment is to be found in the union of song with music, in its popular sense. The old Bards and Minnesingers possessed, in the fullest perfection, the finest and truest elements of Poesy; and Thomas Moore, singing his own ballads, is but putting the final touch to their completion as poems.

To recapitulate, then, we would define in brief the Poetry of words as the *Rhythmical Creation of Beauty*. Beyond the limits of Beauty its province does not extend. Its sole arbiter is Taste. With the Intellect or with the Conscience it has only collateral relations. It has no dependence, unless incidentally, upon either Duty or Truth. That our definition will necessarily exclude much of what, through a supine toleration, has been hitherto ranked as poetical, is a matter which affords us not even momentary concern. We address but the thoughtful, and heed only their approval—with our own. If our suggestions are truthful, then “after many days” shall they be understood as truth, even though found in contradiction of *all* that has been hitherto so understood. If false shall we not be the first to bid them die?

We would reject, of course, all such matters as “Armstrong on Health,”<sup>166</sup> a revolting production; Pope’s Essay on Man,” which may well be content with the title of an “Essay in Rhyme,” “Hudibras,” and other merely humorous pieces. We do not gainsay the peculiar merits of either of these latter compositions—but deny them the position held. In a notice, month before last, of Brainard’s Poems,<sup>167</sup> we took occasion to show that the common use of a certain instrument, (rhythm) had tended, more than ought else, to confound humorous verse with poetry. The observation is now recalled to corroborate what we have just said in respect to the vast effect or force of melody in itself—an effect which could elevate into even momentary confusion with the highest efforts of mind, compositions such as are the greater number of satires or burlesques.

Of the poets who have appeared most fully in-

stinct with the principles now developed, we may mention *Keats* as the most remarkable. He is the sole British poet who has never erred in his themes. Beauty is always his aim.

We have thus shown our ground of objection to the general *themes* of Professor Longfellow. In common with all who claim the sacred title of poet, he should limit his endeavors to the creation of novel moods of beauty, in form, in color, in sound, in sentiment; for over all this wide range has the poetry of words dominion. To what the world terms *prose* may be safely and properly left all else. The artist who doubts of his thesis, may always resolve his doubt by the single question—“might not this matter be as well or better handled in *prose*?” If it *may*, then is it no subject for the Muse. In the general acceptance of the term *Beauty* we are content to rest; being careful only to suggest that, in our peculiar views, it must be understood as inclusive of *the sublime*.

Of the pieces which constitute the present volume, there are not more than one or two thoroughly fulfilling the idea above proposed; although the volume as a whole is by no means so chargeable with didacticism as Mr. Longfellow’s previous book. We would mention as poems *nearly true*, “The Village Blacksmith,” “The Wreck of the Hesperus,” and especially “The Skeleton in Armor.” In the first-mentioned we have the *beauty* of simple-mindedness as a genuine thesis; and this thesis is inimitably handled until the concluding stanza, where the spirit of legitimate pocsy is aggrieved in the pointed antithetical deduction of a *moral* from what has gone before. In “The Wreck of the Hesperus” we have the *beauty* of child-like confidence and innocence, with that of the father’s stern courage and affection. But, with slight exception, those particulars of the storm here detailed are not poetic subjects. Their thrilling *horror* belongs to prose, in which it could be far more effectively discussed, as Professor Longfellow may assure himself at any moment by experiment. There are points of a tempest which afford the loftiest and truest poetical themes—points in which pure beauty is found, or, better still, beauty heightened into the sublime, by terror. But when we read, among other similar things, that

“The salt sea was frozen on her breast,  
The salt tears in her eyes,”

we feel, if not positive disgust, at least a chilling

<sup>166</sup> John Armstrong (1709–79) was a Scottish poet and physician whose didactic poem on *The Art of Preserving Health* (1744) is here referred to.

<sup>167</sup> A reference to Poe’s review, “A Few Words about Brainard,” in *Graham’s Magazine* for February, 1842.

sense of the inappropriate. In the "Skeleton in Armor" we find a pure and perfect thesis artistically treated. We find the beauty of bold courage and self-confidence, of love and maiden devotion, of reckless adventure, and finally of life-contemning grief. Combined with all this we have numerous *points* of beauty apparently insulated, but all aiding the main effect or impression. The heart is stirred, and the mind does not lament its mal-instruction. The metre is simple, sonorous, well-balanced and fully adapted to the sub-<sup>10</sup>ject. Upon the whole, there are few truer poems than this. It has but one defect—an important one. The prose remarks prefacing the narrative are really *necessary*. But every work of art should contain within itself all that is requisite for its own comprehension. And this remark is especially true of the ballad. In poems of magnitude the mind of the reader is not, at all times, enabled to include, in one comprehensive survey, the proportions and proper adjustment of the whole. He is pleased, if at all, with particular pas-<sup>20</sup>sages; and the sum of his pleasure is compounded of the sums of the pleasurable sentiments inspired by these individual passages in the progress of perusal. But, in pieces of less extent, the pleasure is *unique*, in the proper acceptance of this term—the understanding is employed, without difficulty, in the contemplation of the picture *as a whole*; and thus its effect will depend, in great measure, upon the perfection of its finish, upon the nice adaptation of its constituent parts, and especially, upon what is rightly<sup>30</sup> termed by Schlegel *the unity or totality of interest*.<sup>168</sup> But the practice of prefixing explanatory passages is utterly at variance with such unity. By the prefix, we are either put in possession of the subject of the poem; or some hint, historic fact, or suggestion is thereby afforded, not included in the body of the piece, which, without the hint, is incomprehensible. In the latter case, while perusing the poem, the reader must revert, in mind at least, to the prefix, for the necessary explanation. In the former, the<sup>40</sup> poem being a mere paraphrase of the prefix, the interest is divided between the prefix and the paraphrase. In either instance the totality of effect is destroyed.

<sup>168</sup> It would seem that Poe's favorite theory about a totality of effect or singleness of impression is an adaptation of Schlegel's "unity or totality of interest," which Poe found expressed in Schlegel's *Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature*, available in an English translation as early as 1815 and several times translated thereafter.

Of the other original poems in the volume before us, there is none in which the aim of instruction, or *truth*, has not been too obviously substituted for the legitimate aim, *beauty*. In our last number, we took occasion to say that a didactic moral might be happily made the *under-current* of a political theme, and, in "Burton's Magazine," some two years since, we treated this point at length, in a review of Moore's "Alciphron;"<sup>169</sup> but the moral thus conveyed is invariably an ill effect when obtruding beyond the upper current of the thesis itself. Perhaps the worst specimen of this obtrusion is given us by our poet in "Blind Bartimeus" and the "Goblet of Life," where, it will be observed that the *sole* interest of the upper current of meaning depends upon its relation or reference to the under. What we read upon the surface would be *vox et præterea nihil*<sup>170</sup> in default of the moral beneath. The Greek *finales* of "Blind Bartimeus" are an affectation altogether inexcusable. What the small, second-hand, Gibbon-ish pedantry of Byron<sup>171</sup> introduced, is unworthy the imitation of Longfellow.

Of the translations we scarcely think it necessary to speak at all. We regret that our poet will persist in busying himself about such matters. *His* time might be better employed in original conception. Most of these versions are marked with the error upon which we have commented. This error is, in fact, essentially Germanic. "The Luck of Edenhall," however, is a truly beautiful poem; and we say this with all that deference which the opinion of the "Democratic Review" demands. This composition appears to us *one of the very finest*. It has all the free, hearty, *obvious* movement of the true ballad-legend. The greatest force of language is combined in it with the richest imagination, acting in its most legitimate province. Upon the whole, we prefer it even to the "Sword-Song" of Körner. The pointed moral with which it terminates is so exceedingly natural—so perfectly fluent from the incidents—that we have hardly heart to pronounce it in ill taste. We may observe of this ballad, in conclusion, that its subject is more *physical* than is usual in Germany. Its images are rich rather in physical than in moral beauty. And this

<sup>169</sup> In this review Poe had said that the moral sentiment might legitimately appear in a poem as an undercurrent or suggestive secondary expression.

<sup>170</sup> A voice and nothing more; sound without sense.

<sup>171</sup> The phrase, "Gibbon-ish pedantry of Byron," indicates that by 1842 Poe's maturer views of poetry had changed materially from the romantic concepts of his earlier period.



tendency, in Song, is the true one. It is chiefly, if we are not mistaken—it is chiefly amid forms of physical loveliness (we use the word *forms* in its widest sense as embracing modifications of sound and color) that the soul seeks the realization of its dreams of BEAUTY. It is to her demand in this sense especially, that the poet, who is wise, will most frequently and most earnestly respond.

"The Children of the Lord's Supper" is, beyond doubt, a true and most beautiful poem in great part, while, in some particulars, it is too metaphysical to have any pretension to the name. In our last number, we objected, briefly, to its metre—the ordinary Latin or Greek Hexameter—dactyls and spondees at random, with a spondee in conclusion. We maintain that the Hexameter can never be introduced into our language, from the nature of that language itself. This rhythm demands, *for English ears*, a preponderance of natural spondees. Our tongue has few. Not only does the Latin and Greek, with the Swedish, and some others, abound in them; but the Greek and Roman ear had become reconciled (why or how is unknown) to the reception of artificial spondees—that is to say, spondaic words formed partly of one word and partly of another, or from an excised part of one word. In short the ancients were content to read *as they scanned*, or nearly so. It may be safely prophesied that we shall never do this; and thus we shall never admit English Hexameters. The attempt to introduce them, after the repeated failures of Sir Philip Sydney, and others, is, perhaps, somewhat discreditable to the scholarship of Professor Longfellow. The "Democratic Review," in saying that he has triumphed over difficulties in this rhythm, has been deceived, it is evident, by the facility with which some of these verses may be read. In glancing over the poem, we do not observe a single verse which can be read, *to English ears, as a Greek Hexameter*. There are many, however, which can be well read as mere English dactylic verses; such, for example, as the well-known lines of Byron, commencing

Know ye the | land where the | cypress and | myrtle.

These lines (although full of irregularities) are, in their perfection, formed of three dactyls and a cæsure—just as if we should cut short the initial verse of the Bucolics thus—

Titire | tu patu | lae recu | bans—

The "myrtle," at the close of Byron's line, is a double rhyme, and must be understood as one syllable.

Now a great number of Professor Longfellow's Hexameters are merely these dactylic lines, *continued for two feet*. For example—

Whispered the | race of the | flowers and | merry on |  
balancing | branches.

In this example, also, "branches," which is a double ending, must be regarded as the cæsure, or one syllable, of which alone it has the force.

As we have already alluded, in one or two regards, to a notice of these poems which appeared in the "Democratic Review," we may as well here proceed with some few further comments upon the article in question—with whose general tenor we are happy to agree.

The Review speaks of "Maidenhood" as a poem, "not to be understood but at the expense of more time and trouble than a song can justly claim." We are scarcely less surprised at this opinion from Mr. Langtree<sup>172</sup> than we were at the condemnation of "The Luck of Edenhall."

"Maidenhood" is faulty, it appears to us, only on the score of its theme, which is somewhat didactic. Its *meaning* seems simplicity itself. A maiden on the verge of womanhood, hesitating to enjoy life (for which she has a strong appetite) through a false idea of duty, is bidden to fear nothing, having purity of heart as her lion of Una.

What Mr. Langtree styles "an unfortunate peculiarity" in Mr. Longfellow, resulting from "adherence to a false system," has really been always regarded by us as one of his idiosyncratic merits. "In each poem," says the critic, "he has but *one* idea which, in the progress of his song is gradually unfolded, and at last reaches its full development in the concluding lines; this singleness of thought might lead a harsh critic to suspect intellectual barrenness." It leads us, individually, only to a full sense of the artistical power and knowledge of the poet. We confess that now, for the first time, we hear unity of conception objected to as a defect. But Mr. Langtree seems to have fallen into the singular error of supposing the poet to have absolutely *but one idea* in each of his ballads. Yet how "one idea" can be "gradually un-

<sup>172</sup> Poe attributes the review to S. D. Langtree, editor of the *Democratic Review*.

folded" without other ideas, is, to us, a mystery of mysteries. Mr. Longfellow, very properly, has but one *leading* idea which forms the basis of his poem; but to the aid and development of this one there are innumerable others, of which the rare excellence is, that all are in keeping, that none could be well omitted, that each tends to the one general effect. It is unnecessary to say another word upon this topic.

In speaking of "Excelsior," Mr. Langtree (are we 10 wrong in attributing the notice to his very forcible pen?) seems to labor under some similar misconception. "It carries along with it," says he, "a false moral which greatly diminishes its merit in our eyes. The great merit of a picture, whether made with the pencil or pen, is its *truth*; and this merit does not belong to Mr. Longfellow's sketch. Men of genius may and probably do, meet with greater difficulties in their struggles with the world than their fellow-men who are less highly gifted; but their power of 20 overcoming obstacles is proportionably greater, and the result of their laborious suffering is not death but immortality."

That the chief merit of a picture is its *truth*, is an assertion deplorably erroneous. Even in Painting, which is, more essentially than Poetry, a mimetic art, the proposition cannot be sustained. Truth is not even the *aim*. Indeed it is curious to observe how very slight a degree of truth is sufficient to satisfy the mind, which acquiesces in the absence of numerous 30 essentials in the thing depicted. An outline frequently stirs the spirit more pleasantly than the most elaborate picture. We need only refer to the compositions of Flaxman<sup>173</sup> and of Retzsch.<sup>174</sup> Here all

details are omitted—nothing can be farther from *truth*. Without even color the most thrilling effects are produced. In statues we are rather pleased than disgusted with the *want of the eyeball*. The hair of the Venus de Medicis was *gilded*. Truth indeed! The grapes of Zeuxis as well as the curtain of Parrhasius<sup>175</sup> were received as indisputable evidence of the truthful ability of these artists—but they are not even *classed among their pictures*. If truth is the highest 10 aim of either Painting or Poesy, then Jan Steen<sup>176</sup> was a greater artist than Angelo,<sup>177</sup> and Crabbe<sup>178</sup> is a more noble poet than Milton.

But we have not quoted the observation of Mr. Langtree to deny its philosophy; our design was simply to show that he has misunderstood the poet. "Excelsior" has not even a remote tendency to the interpretation assigned it by the critic. It depicts the *earnest upward impulse of the soul*—an impulse not to be subdued even in Death. Despising danger, resisting pleasure, the youth, bearing the banner inscribed "*Excelsior!*" (higher still!) struggles through all difficulties to an Alpine summit. Warned to be content with the elevation attained, his cry is still "*Excelsior!*" And, even in falling dead on its highest pinnacle, his cry is still "*Excelsior!*" There is yet an immortal height to be surmounted—an ascent in Eternity. The poet holds in view the idea of never-ending *progress*. That he is misunderstood is rather the misfortune of Mr. Langtree than the fault of 30 Mr. Longfellow. There is an old adage about the difficulty of one's furnishing an auditor both with matter to be comprehended and brains for its comprehension.

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### Twice-Told Tales<sup>179</sup>

By Nathaniel Hawthorne, Two Volumes,  
James Munroe & Co.: Boston

We said a few hurried words about Mr. Hawthorne in our last number, with the design of speaking more fully in the present. We are still, however, pressed for room, and must necessarily discuss his volumes

more briefly and more at random than their high merits deserve.

The book professes to be a collection of *tales*, yet is, in two respects, misnamed. These pieces are now in their third republication, and, of course, are thrice-

<sup>173</sup> John Flaxman (1755–1826), an English sculptor.

<sup>174</sup> Friedrich A. M. Retzsch (1779–1857), a German painter.

<sup>175</sup> Zeuxis and Parrhasius were Greek contemporary and rival Greek painters about the beginning of the fourth century B.C.

<sup>176</sup> Jan Steen (1626–79), a Dutch genre painter.

<sup>177</sup> Michelangelo (1475–1564), Italian painter and sculptor.

<sup>178</sup> George Crabbe (1754–1832), an English realistic poet.

<sup>179</sup> Published in *Graham's Magazine*, May, 1842.

told. Moreover, they are by no means *all* tales, either in the ordinary or in the legitimate understanding of the term. Many of them are pure essays; for example, "Sights from a Steeple," "Sunday at Home," "Little Annie's Ramble," "A Rill from the Town Pump," "The Toll-Gatherer's Day," "The Haunted Mind," "The Sister Years," "Snow-Flakes," "Night Sketches," and "Foot-Prints on the Sea-Shore." We mention these matters chiefly on account of their discrepancy with that marked precision and finish by <sup>10</sup> which the body of the work is distinguished.

Of the essays just named, we must be content to speak in brief. They are each and all beautiful, without being characterised by the polish and adaptation so visible in the tales proper. A painter would at once note their leading or predominant feature, and style it *repose*. There is no attempt at effect. All is quiet, thoughtful, subdued. Yet this repose may exist simultaneously with high originality of thought; and Mr. Hawthorne has demonstrated the fact. At every turn <sup>20</sup> we meet with novel combinations; yet these combinations never surpass the limits of the quiet. We are soothed as we read; and withal is a calm astonishment that ideas so apparently obvious have never occurred or been presented to us before. Herein our author differs materially from Lamb or Hunt or Hazlitt—who, with vivid originality of manner and expression, have less of the true novelty of thought than is generally supposed, and whose originality, at best, has an uneasy and meretricious quaintness, replete <sup>30</sup> with startling effects unfounded in nature, and inducing trains of reflection which lead to no satisfactory result. The Essays of Hawthorne have much of the character of Irving, with more of originality, and less of finish; while, compared with the Spectator, they have a vast superiority at all points. The Spectator, Mr. Irving, and Mr. Hawthorne have in common that tranquil and subdued manner which we have chosen to denominate *repose*; but, in the case of the two former, this repose is attained rather by <sup>40</sup> the absence of novel combination, or of originality, than otherwise, and consists chiefly in the calm, quiet, unostentatious expression of commonplace thoughts, in an unambitious, unadulterated Saxon. In them, by strong effort, we are made to conceive the absence of all. In the essays before us the absence of effort is too obvious to be mistaken, and a strong undercurrent of *suggestion* runs continuously beneath the upper stream of the tranquil thesis. In short,

these effusions of Mr. Hawthorne are the product of a truly imaginative intellect, restrained, and in some measure repressed, by fastidiousness of taste, by constitutional melancholy and by indolence.

But it is of his tales that we desire principally to speak.<sup>180</sup> The tale proper, in our opinion, affords unquestionably the fairest field for the exercise of the loftiest talent, which can be afforded by the wide domains of mere prose. Were we bidden to say how the highest genius could be most advantageously employed for the best display of its own powers, we should answer, without hesitation—in the composition of a rhymed poem, not to exceed in length what might be perused in an hour. Within this limit alone can the highest order of true poetry exist. We need only here say, upon this topic, that, in almost all classes of composition, the unity of effect or impression is a point of the greatest importance. It is clear, moreover, that this unity cannot be thoroughly preserved in productions whose perusal cannot be completed at one sitting. We may continue the reading of a prose composition, from the very nature of prose itself, much longer than we can persevere, to any good purpose, in the perusal of a poem. This latter, if truly fulfilling the demands of the poetic sentiment, induces an exaltation of the soul which cannot be long sustained. All high excitements are necessarily transient. Thus a long poem is a paradox. And, without unity of impression, the deepest effects cannot be brought about. Epics were the offspring of an imperfect sense of Art, and their reign is no more. A poem too brief may produce a vivid, but never an intense or enduring impression. Without a certain continuity of effort—without a certain duration or repetition of purpose—the soul is never deeply moved. There must be the dropping of the water upon the rock. De Béranger<sup>181</sup> has wrought brilliant things—pungent and spirit-stirring—but, like all immassive bodies, they lack *momentum*, and thus fail to satisfy the Poetic Sentiment. They sparkle and excite, but, from want of continuity, fail deeply to impress. Extreme brevity will degenerate into epigrammatism; but the sin of extreme length is even more unpardonable. *In medio tutissimus ibis.*<sup>182</sup>

Were we called upon, however, to designate that

<sup>180</sup> This and the succeeding three paragraphs present Poe's celebrated theory of the short story.

<sup>181</sup> Poe used two lines from De Béranger's "Le Refus" as a motto for "The Fall of the House of Usher."

<sup>182</sup> "You will proceed most safely in the middle path."

class of composition which, next to such a poem as we have suggested, should best fulfil the demands of high genius—should offer it the most advantageous field of exertion—we should unhesitatingly speak of the prose tale, as Mr. Hawthorne has here exemplified it. We allude to the short prose narrative, requiring from a half-hour to one or two hours in its perusal. The ordinary novel is objectionable, from its length, for reasons already stated in substance. As it cannot be read at one sitting, it deprives itself, of course, of the immense force derivable from *totality*. Worldly interests intervening during the pauses of perusal, modify, annul, or counteract, in a greater or less degree, the impressions of the book. But simple cessation in reading, would, of itself, be sufficient to destroy the true unity. In the brief tale, however, the author is enabled to carry out the fullness of his intention, be it what it may. During the hour of perusal the soul of the reader is at the writer's control. There are no external or extrinsic influences 20—resulting from weariness or interruption.

A skilful literary artist has constructed a tale. If wise, he has not fashioned his thoughts to accommodate his incidents; but having conceived, with deliberate care, a certain unique or single *effect* to be wrought out, he then invents such incidents—he then combines such events as may best aid him in establishing this preconceived effect. If his very initial sentence tend not to the outbringing of this effect, then he has failed in his first step. In the whole com- 30position there should be no word written, of which the tendency, direct or indirect, is not to the one pre-established design. And by such means, with such care and skill, a picture is at length painted which leaves in the mind of him who contemplates it with a kindred art, a sense of the fullest satisfaction. The idea of the tale has been presented unblemished, because undisturbed; and this is an end unattainable by the novel. Undue brevity is just as exceptionable here as in the poem; but undue length is yet more to 40be avoided.

We have said that the tale has a point of superiority even over the poem. In fact, while the *rhythm* of this latter is an essential aid in the development of the poet's highest idea—the idea of the Beautiful—the artificialities of this rhythm are an inseparable bar to the development of all points of thought or expression which have their basis in *Truth*. But Truth is often, and in very great degree, the aim of the tale.

Some of the finest tales are tales of ratiocination. Thus the field of this species of composition, if not in so elevated a region on the mountain of Mind, is a table-land of far vaster extent than the domain of the mere poem. Its products are never so rich, but infinitely more numerous, and more appreciable by the mass of mankind. The writer of the prose tale, in short, may bring to his theme a vast variety of modes or inflections of thought and expression—(the ratio- 10cinative, for example, the sarcastic, or the humorous) which are not only antagonistical to the nature of the poem, but absolutely forbidden by one of its most peculiar and indispensable adjuncts; we allude, of course, to rhythm. It may be added here, *par parenthèse*,<sup>183</sup> that the author who aims at the purely beautiful in a prose tale is laboring at great disadvantage. For Beauty can be better treated in the poem. Not so with terror, or passion, or horror, or a multitude of such other points. And here it will be seen how full of prejudice are the usual animadver- 15sions against those *tales of effect*, many fine examples of which were found in the earlier numbers of Blackwood.<sup>184</sup> The impressions produced were wrought in a legitimate sphere of action, and constituted a legitimate although sometimes an exaggerated interest. They were relished by every man of genius: although there were found many men of genius who condemned them without just ground. The true critic will but demand that the design intended be accom- 20plished, to the fullest extent, by the means most advantageously applicable.

We have very few American tales of real merit—we may say, indeed, none, with the exception of "The Tales of a Traveller" of Washington Irving, and these "Twice-Told Tales" of Mr. Hawthorne. Some of the pieces of Mr. John Neal<sup>185</sup> abound in vigor and originality; but in general, his compositions of this class are excessively diffuse, extravagant, and indicative of an imperfect sentiment of Art. Articles at random are, now and then, met with in our periodicals which might be advantageously compared with the best effusions of the British Magazines; but, upon the whole, we are far behind our progenitors in this department of literature.

<sup>183</sup> By way of parenthesis.

<sup>184</sup> *Blackwood's Edinburgh Monthly Magazine*, founded in 1817, notable for a type of romantic, often Gothic, fiction which Poe half-imitated, half-caricatured.

<sup>185</sup> John Neal (1790-1876), an American novelist, poet, and writer of miscellaneous pieces.

Of Mr. Hawthorne's Tales we would say, emphatically, that they belong to the highest region of Art—an Art subservient to genius of a very lofty order. We had supposed, with good reason for so supposing, that he had been thrust into his present position by one of the impudent *cliques* which beset our literature, and whose pretensions it is our full purpose to expose at the earliest opportunity; but we have been most agreeably mistaken. We know of few compositions which the critic can more honestly commend than these "Twice-Told Tales." As Americans, we feel proud of the book.

Mr. Hawthorne's distinctive trait is invention, creation, imagination, originality—a trait which, in the literature of fiction, is positively worth all the rest. But the nature of originality, so far as regards its manifestations in letters, is but imperfectly understood. The inventive or original mind as frequently displays itself in novelty of *tone* as in novelty of matter. Mr. Hawthorne is original at *all* 20 points.

It would be a matter of some difficulty to designate the best of these tales; we repeat that, without exception, they are beautiful. "Wakefield" is remarkable for the skill with which an old idea—a well-known incident—is worked up or discussed. A man of whims conceives the purpose of quitting his wife and residing *incognito*, for twenty years, in her immediate neighborhood. Something of this kind actually happened in London. The force of Mr. Hawthorne's 30 tale lies in the analysis of the motives which must or might have impelled the husband to such folly, in the first instance, with the possible causes of his perseverance. Upon this thesis a sketch of singular power has been constructed.

"The Wedding Knell" is full of the boldest imagination—an imagination fully controlled by taste. The most captious critic could find no flaw in this production.

"The Minister's Black Veil" is a masterly composition of which the sole defect is that to the rabble its exquisite skill will be *caviare*.<sup>186</sup> The obvious meaning of this article will be found to smother its insinuated one. The *moral* put into the mouth of the dying minister will be supposed to convey the *true* import of the narrative; and that a crime of dark dye (having reference to the "young lady"), has been

<sup>186</sup> Cf. *Hamlet*, II, ii, 471: "'Twas caviare to the general," i.e., the rabble was incapable of appreciating it.

committed, is a point which only minds congenial with that of the author will perceive.

"Mr. Higginbotham's Catastrophe" is vividly original and managed most dexterously.

"Dr. Heidegger's Experiment" is exceedingly well imagined, and executed with surpassing ability. The artist breathes in every line of it.

"The White Old Maid" is objectionable, even more than the "Minister's Black Veil," on the score of its mysticism. Even with the thoughtful and analytic, there will be much trouble in penetrating its entire import.

"The Hollow of the Three Hills" we would quote in full, had we space;—not as evincing higher talent than any of the other pieces, but as affording an excellent example of the author's peculiar ability. The subject is commonplace. A witch subjects the Distant and the Past to the view of a mourner. It has been the fashion to describe, in such cases, a mirror in which the images of the absent appear; or a cloud of smoke is made to arise, and thence the figures are gradually unfolded. Mr. Hawthorne has wonderfully heightened his effect by making the ear, in place of the eye, the medium by which the fantasy is conveyed. The head of the mourner is enveloped in the cloak of the witch, and within its magic folds there arise sounds which have an all-sufficient intelligence. Throughout this article also, the artist is conspicuous—not more in positive than in negative merits. Not only is all done that should be done, but (what perhaps is an end with more difficulty attained) there is nothing done which should not be. Every word *tells*, and there is not a word which does *not* tell.

In "Howe's Masquerade" we observe something which resembles plagiarism<sup>187</sup>—but which *may be* a very flattering coincidence of thought. We quote the passage in question.

[Quotation.]

The idea here is, that the figure in the cloak is the phantom or reduplication of Sir William Howe; but in an article called "William Wilson," one of the "Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque," we have not only the same idea, but the same idea similarly presented in several respects. We quote two paragraphs, which our readers may compare with what

<sup>187</sup> Poe overlooked the fact that "Howe's Masquerade" appeared in the *Democratic Review* for May, 1838, while "William Wilson" first appeared in *Burton's Gentleman's Magazine* for October, 1839.

has been already given. We have italicized, above, the immediate particulars of resemblance.

[Quotation.]

Here it will be observed that, not only are the two general conceptions identical, but there are various *points* of similarity. In each case the figure seen is the wraith or duplication of the beholder. In each case the scene is a masquerade. In each case the figure is cloaked. In each, there is a quarrel—that is to say, angry words pass between the parties. In each the beholder is enraged. In each the cloak and sword fall upon the floor. The “villain, unmuffle yourself,” of Mr. H. is precisely paralleled by a passage at page 56 of “William Wilson.”

In the way of objection we have scarcely a word to say of these tales. There is, perhaps, a somewhat too general or prevalent *tone*—a tone of melancholy and mysticism.<sup>188</sup> The subjects are insufficiently varied. There is not so much of *versatility* evinced as we might well be warranted in expecting from the high powers of Mr. Hawthorne. But beyond these trivial exceptions we have really none to make. The style is purity itself. Force abounds. High imagination gleams from every page. Mr. Hawthorne is a man of the truest genius. We only regret that the limits of our Magazine will not permit us to pay him that full tribute of commendation, which, under other circumstances, we should be so eager to pay.

1842

### *The Philosophy of Composition* <sup>189</sup>

Charles Dickens, in a note now lying before me, alluding to an examination I once made of the mechanism of “Barnaby Rudge,” says—“By the way, are you aware that Godwin wrote his ‘Caleb Williams’ backwards? He first involved his hero in a web of difficulties, forming the second volume, and then, for the first, cast about him for some mode of accounting for what had been done.”<sup>190</sup>

I cannot think this the *precise* mode of procedure on the part of Godwin—and indeed what he himself acknowledges, is not altogether in accordance with Mr. Dickens’ idea—but the author of “Caleb Williams” was too good an artist not to perceive the advantage derivable from at least a somewhat similar process. Nothing is more clear than that every plot, worth the name, must be elaborated to its *dénouement* <sup>191</sup> before anything be attempted with the pen. It is only with the *dénouement* constantly in view that we can give a plot its indispensable air of consequence, or causation, by making the incidents, and especially the tone at all points, tend to the development of the intention.

There is a radical error, I think, in the usual mode of constructing a story. Either history affords a thesis

—or one is suggested by an incident of the day—or, at best, the author sets himself to work in the combination of striking events to form merely the basis of his narrative—designing, generally, to fill in with description, dialogue, or authorial comment, whatever crevices of fact, or action, may, from page to page, render themselves apparent.

I prefer commencing with the consideration of an *effect*. Keeping originality *always* in view—for he is false to himself who ventures to dispense with so obvious and so easily attainable a source of interest—I say to myself, in the first place, “Of the innumerable effects, or impressions, of which the heart, the intellect, or (more generally) the soul is susceptible, what one shall I, on the present occasion, select?” Having chosen a novel, first, and secondly a vivid effect, I consider whether it can be best wrought by incident or tone—whether by ordinary incidents and peculiar tone, or the converse, or by peculiarity both of incident and tone—afterward looking about me (or rather within) for such combinations of event, or tone, as shall best aid me in the construction of the effect.

I have often thought how interesting a magazine paper might be written by any author who would—

<sup>188</sup> In view of Poe’s own practice, it is odd that he should rate this a demerit.

<sup>189</sup> Published in *Graham’s Magazine*, April, 1846.

<sup>190</sup> Dickens’ idea was derived from the preface of William Godwin’s *Caleb Williams* (1794).

In one of his “Marginalia” Poe wrote, “I cannot help thinking that romance-writers in general, might, now and then, find their account in taking a hint from the Chinese, who, in spite of

building their houses downwards, have still sense enough to *begin their books at the end.*”

On August 9, 1846, Poe spoke of “The Philosophy of Composition” as “my best specimen of analysis.”

<sup>191</sup> *Dénouement*, from the French *dénouer*, to untie, *i.e.*, unraveling of a plot.

that is to say who could—detail, step by step, the processes by which any one of his compositions attained its ultimate point of completion. Why such a paper has never been given to the world, I am much at a loss to say—but, perhaps, the authorial vanity has had more to do with the omission than any one other cause. Most writers—poets in especial—prefer having it understood that they compose by a species of fine frenzy—an ecstatic intuition—and would positively shudder at letting the public take a peep<sup>10</sup> behind the scenes, at the elaborate and vacillating crudities of thought—at the true purposes seized only at the last moment—at the innumerable glimpses of idea that arrived not at the maturity of full view—at the fully matured fancies discarded in despair, as unmanageable—at the cautious selections and rejections—at the painful crasures and interpolations—in a word, at the wheels and pinions—the tackle for scene-shifting—the step-ladders and demon-traps—the cock's feathers, the red paint and the black<sup>20</sup> patches, which, in ninety-nine cases out of the hundred, constitute the properties of the literary *histrio*.<sup>192</sup>

I am aware, on the other hand, that the case is by no means common, in which an author is at all in condition to retrace the steps by which his conclusions have been attained. In general, suggestions, having arisen pell-mell, are pursued and forgotten in a similar manner.

For my own part, I have neither sympathy with<sup>30</sup> the repugnance alluded to, nor, at any time the least difficulty in recalling to mind the progressive steps of any of my compositions; and, since the interest of an analysis, or reconstruction, such as I have considered a *desideratum*,<sup>193</sup> is quite independent of any real or fancied interest in the thing analyzed, it will not be regarded as a breach of decorum on my part to show the *modus operandi*<sup>194</sup> by which some one of my own works was put together. I select "The Raven," as most generally known. It is my design to<sup>40</sup> render it manifest that no one point in its composition is referrible either to accident or intuition—that the work proceeded, step by step, to its completion with the precision and rigid consequence of a mathematical problem.

Let us dismiss, as irrelevant to the poem, *per se*,

the circumstance—or say the necessity—which, in the first place, gave rise to the intention of composing a poem that should suit at once the popular and the critical taste.

We commence, then, with this intention.

The initial consideration was that of extent. If any literary work is too long to be read at one sitting, we must be content to dispense with the immensely important effect derivable from unity of impression—for, if two sittings be required, the affairs of the world interfere, and every thing like totality is at once destroyed. But since, *ceteris paribus*,<sup>195</sup> no poet can afford to dispense with *any thing* that may advance his design, it but remains to be seen whether there is, in extent, any advantage to counterbalance the loss of unity which attends it. Here I say no, at once. What we term a long poem is, in fact, merely a succession of brief ones—that is to say, of brief poetical effects. It is needless to demonstrate that a poem is such, only inasmuch as it intensely excites, by elevating, the soul; and all intense excitements are, through a psychal<sup>196</sup> necessity, brief. For this reason, at least one half of the "Paradise Lost" is essentially prose—a succession of poetical excitements interspersed, *inevitably*, with corresponding depressions—the whole being deprived, through the extremeness of its length, of the vastly important artistic element, totality, or unity, of effect.<sup>197</sup>

It appears evident, then, that there is a distinct limit, as regards length, to all works of literary art—the limit of a single sitting—and that, although in certain classes of prose composition, such as "Robinson Crusoe," (demanding no unity,) this limit may be advantageously overpassed, it can never properly be overpassed in a poem. Within this limit, the extent of a poem may be made to bear mathematical relation to its merit—in other words, to the excitement or elevation—again in other words, to the degree of the true poetical effect which it is capable

<sup>195</sup> Other things being equal.

<sup>196</sup> Psychological.

<sup>197</sup> At this point Professor Hardin Craig has made the following comment: "One might be permitted to suggest tentatively that Poe is slightly wrong about this principle. The thing that happens in the unity of long great works, such as *Paradise Lost* and *King Lear*, is a continual making and breaking of a line of interest or suspense. After each successive break—and such breaks do occur—the interest or suspense returns to the reader (perhaps under changed aspect) with renewed insistence and power. The same thing can be said of *Robinson Crusoe*, which is no more entitled to dispense with unity than any short poem or short story ever written."—*Edgar Allan Poe*, ed. by Margaret Alterton and Hardin Craig (New York, 1935), 537–38.

<sup>192</sup> Actor.

<sup>193</sup> Anything desired as essential or needed.

<sup>194</sup> Method of working.

of inducing; for it is clear that the brevity must be in direct ratio of the intensity of the intended effect:—this, with one proviso—that a certain degree of duration is absolutely requisite for the production of any effect at all.

Holding in view these considerations, as well as that degree of excitement which I deemed not above the popular, while not below the critical, taste, I reached at once what I conceived the proper *length* for my intended poem—a length of about one hundred lines. It is, in fact, a hundred and eight.

My next thought concerned the choice of an impression, or effect, to be conveyed: and here I may as well observe that, throughout the construction, I kept steadily in view the design of rendering the work *universally* appreciable. I should be carried too far out of my immediate topic were I to demonstrate a point upon which I have repeatedly insisted, and which, with the poetical, stands not in the slightest need of demonstration—the point, I mean, that Beauty is the sole legitimate province of the poem. A few words, however, in elucidation of my real meaning, which some of my friends have evinced a disposition to misrepresent. That pleasure which is at once the most intense, the most elevating, and the most pure, is, I believe, found in the contemplation of the beautiful. When, indeed, men speak of Beauty, they mean, precisely, not a quality, as is supposed, but an effect—they refer, in short, just to that intense and pure elevation of *soul*—not of intellect, or of heart—upon which I have commented, and which is experienced in consequence of contemplating “the beautiful.” Now I designate Beauty as the province of the poem, merely because it is an obvious rule of Art that effects should be made to spring from direct causes—that objects should be attained through means best adapted for their attainment—no one as yet having been weak enough to deny that the peculiar elevation alluded to is *most readily* attained in the poem. Now the object Truth, or the satisfaction of the intellect, and the object Passion, or the excitement of the heart, are, although attainable, to a certain extent, in poetry, far more readily attainable in prose. Truth, in fact, demands a precision, and Passion a *homeliness* (the truly passionate will comprehend me) which are absolutely antagonistic to that Beauty which, I maintain, is the excitement, or pleasurable elevation, of the soul. It by no means follows from any thing here said, that passion, or

even truth, may not be introduced, and even profitably introduced, into a poem—for they may serve in elucidation, or aid the general effect, as do discords in music, by contrast—but the true artist will always contrive, first, to tone them into proper subservience to the predominant aim, and, secondly, to enveil them, as far as possible, in that Beauty which is the atmosphere and the essence of the poem.

Regarding, then, Beauty as my province, my next question referred to the *tone* of its highest manifestation—and all experience has shown that this tone is one of *sadness*. Beauty of whatever kind, in its supreme development, invariably excites the sensitive soul to tears.<sup>198</sup> Melancholy is thus the most legitimate of all the poetical tones.

The length, the province, and the tone, being thus determined, I betook myself to ordinary induction, with the view of obtaining some artistic piquancy which might serve me as a key-note in the construction of the poem—some pivot upon which the whole structure might turn. In carefully thinking over all the usual artistic effects—or more properly *points*, in the theatrical sense—I did not fail to perceive immediately that no one had been so universally employed as that of the *refrain*. The universality of its employment sufficed to assure me of its intrinsic value, and spared me the necessity of submitting it to analysis. I considered it, however, with regard to its susceptibility of improvement, and soon saw it to be in a primitive condition. As commonly used, the *refrain*, or burden, not only is limited to lyric verse, but depends for its impression upon the force of monotone—both in sound and thought. The pleasure is deduced solely from the sense of identity—of repetition. I resolved to diversify, and so heighten, the effect, by adhering, in general, to the monotone of sound, while I continually varied that of thought: that is to say, I determined to produce continuously novel effects, by the variation of *the application of the refrain*—the *refrain* itself remaining, for the most part, unvaried.

These points being settled, I next bethought me of the *nature* of my *refrain*. Since its application was to be repeatedly varied, it was clear that the *refrain* itself must be brief, for there would have been an insurmountable difficulty in frequent variations of

<sup>198</sup> The argument broached in this sentence is all-important in the sequence of ideas by which he arrives at the conclusion that the death of a beautiful woman is the most poetic subject.



application in any sentence of length. In proportion to the brevity of the sentence, would, of course, be the facility of the variation. This led me at once to a single word as the best *refrain*.

The question now arose as to the *character* of the word. Having made up my mind to a *refrain*, the division of the poem into stanzas was, of course, a corollary: the *refrain* forming the close of each stanza. That such a close, to have force, must be sonorous and susceptible of protracted emphasis, admitted no doubt: and these considerations inevitably led me to the long *o* as the most sonorous vowel, in connection with *r* as the most producible consonant.

The sound of the *refrain* being thus determined, it became necessary to select a word embodying this sound, and at the same time in the fullest possible keeping with that melancholy which I had predetermined as the tone of the poem. In such a search it would have been absolutely impossible to overlook the word "Nevermore." In fact, it was the very first 20 which presented itself.

The next *desideratum* was a pretext for the continuous use of the one word "nevermore." In observing the difficulty which I at once found in inventing a sufficiently plausible reason for its continuous repetition, I did not fail to perceive that this difficulty arose solely from the pre-assumption that the word was to be so continuously or monotonously spoken by a *human* being—I did not fail to perceive, in short, that the difficulty lay in the reconciliation 30 of this monotony with the exercise of reason on the part of the creature repeating the word. Here, then, immediately arose the idea of a *non*-reasoning creature capable of speech; and, very naturally, a parrot, in the first instance, suggested itself, but was superseded forthwith by a Raven, as equally capable of speech, and infinitely more in keeping with the intended *tone*.

I had now gone so far as the conception of a Raven—the bird of ill omen—monotonously repeating the one word, "Nevermore," at the conclusion of each stanza, in a poem of melancholy tone, and in length about one hundred lines. Now, never losing sight of the object *supremeness*, or perfection, at all points, I asked myself—"Of all melancholy topics, what, according to the *universal* understanding of mankind, is the *most* melancholy?" Death—was the obvious reply. "And when," I said, "is this most melancholy of topics most poetical?" From

what I have already explained at some length, the answer, here also, is obvious—"When it most closely allies itself to *Beauty*: the death, then, of a beautiful woman is, unquestionably, the most poetical topic in the world—and equally is it beyond doubt that the lips best suited for such topic are those of a bereaved lover."

I had now to combine the two ideas, of a lover lamenting his deceased mistress and a Raven continuously repeating the word "Nevermore."—I had to combine these, bearing in mind my design of varying, at every turn, the *application* of the word repeated; but the only intelligible mode of such combination is that of imagining the Raven employing the word in answer to the queries of the lover. And here it was that I saw at once the opportunity afforded for the effect on which I had been depending—that is to say, the effect of the *variation of application*. I saw that I could make the first query propounded by the lover—the first query to which the Raven should reply "Nevermore"—that I could make this first query a commonplace one—the second less so—the third still less, and so on—until at length the lover, startled from his original *nonchalance* by the melancholy character of the word itself—by its frequent repetition—and by a consideration of the ominous reputation of the fowl that uttered it—is at length excited to superstition, and wildly propounds queries of a far different character—queries whose solution he has passionately at heart—propounds them half in superstition and half in that species of despair which delights in self-torture—propounds them not altogether because he believes in the prophetic or demoniac character of the bird (which, reason assures him, is merely repeating a lesson learned by rote) but because he experiences a phrenzied pleasure in so modeling his questions as to receive from the *expected* "Nevermore" the most delicious because the most intolerable of sorrow. Perceiving the opportunity thus afforded me—or, more strictly, thus forced upon me in the progress of the construction—I first established in mind the climax, or concluding query—that query to which "Nevermore" should be in the last place an answer—that in reply to which this word "Nevermore" should involve the utmost conceivable amount of sorrow and despair.

Here then the poem may be said to have its beginning—at the end, where all works of art should begin—for it was here, at this point of my precon-

siderations, that I first put pen to paper in the composition of the stanza:

"Prophet," said I, "thing of evil! prophet still if bird or devil!

By that heaven that bends above us—by that God we both adore,

Tell this soul with sorrow laden, if within the distant Aidenn,

It shall clasp a sainted maiden whom the angels name Lenore—

Clasp a rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name Lenore."

Quoth the raven "Nevermore."

I composed this stanza, at this point, first that, by establishing the climax, I might the better vary and graduate, as regards seriousness and importance, the preceding queries of the lover—and, secondly, that I might definitely settle the rhythm, the metre, and the length and general arrangement of the stanza—as well as graduate the stanzas which were to precede, so that none of them might surpass this in 20  
rhythmical effect. Had I been able, in the subsequent composition, to construct more vigorous stanzas, I should, without scruple, have purposely enfeebled them, so as not to interfere with the climacteric effect.

And here I may as well say a few words of the versification. My first object (as usual) was originality. The extent to which this has been neglected, in versification, is one of the most unaccountable things in the world. Admitting that there is little pos- 30  
sibility of variety in mere *rhythm*, it is still clear that the possible varieties of metre and stanza are absolutely infinite—and yet, *for centuries, no man, in verse, has ever done, or ever seemed to think of doing, an original thing*. The fact is, that originality (unless in minds of very unusual force) is by no means a matter, as some suppose, of impulse or intuition. In general, to be found, it must be elaborately sought, and although a positive merit of the highest class, demands in its attainment less of invention 40  
than negation.

Of course, I pretend to no originality in either the rhythm or metre of the "Raven." The former is trochaic—the latter is octameter acatalectic, alternating with heptameter catalectic repeated in the *refrain* of the fifth verse, and terminating with tetrameter catalectic. Less pedantically—the feet employed throughout (trochees) consist of a long syllable followed by a short: the first line of the stanza con-

sists of eight of these feet—the second of seven and a half (in effect two-thirds)—the third of eight—the fourth of seven and a half—the fifth the same—the sixth three and a half. Now, each of these lines, taken individually, has been employed before, and what originality the "Raven" has, is in their *combination into stanza*; nothing even remotely approaching this combination has ever been attempted. The effect of this originality of combination is aided by other unusual, and some altogether novel effects, arising from an extension of the application of the principles of rhyme and alliteration.

The next point to be considered was the mode of bringing together the lover and the Raven—and the first branch of this consideration was the *locale*. For this the most natural suggestion might seem to be a forest, or the fields—but it has always appeared to me that a close *circumscription of space* is absolutely necessary to the effect of insulated incident:—it has the force of a frame to a picture. It has an indisputable moral power in keeping concentrated the attention, and, of course, must not be confounded with mere unity of place.

I determined, then, to place the lover in his chamber—in a chamber rendered sacred to him by memories of her who had frequented it. The room is represented as richly furnished—this in mere pursuance of the ideas I have already explained on the subject of Beauty, as the sole true poetical basis.

The *locale* being thus determined, I had now to introduce the bird—and the thought of introducing him through the window, was inevitable. The idea of making the lover suppose, in the first instance, that the flapping of the wings of the bird against the shutter, is a "tapping" at the door, originated in a wish to increase, by prolonging, the reader's curiosity, and in a desire to admit the incidental effect arising from the lover's throwing open the door, finding all dark, and thence adopting the half-fancy that it was the spirit of his mistress that knocked.

I made the night tempestuous, first, to account for the Raven's seeking admission, and secondly, for the effect of contrast with the (physical) serenity within the chamber.

I made the bird alight on the bust of Pallas, also for the effect of contrast between the marble and the plumage—it being understood that the bust was absolutely *suggested* by the bird—the bust of *Pallas* being chosen, first, as most in keeping with the

scholarship of the lover, and, secondly, for the sonorousness of the word, Pallas, itself.

About the middle of the poem, also, I have availed myself of the force of contrast, with a view of deepening the ultimate impression. For example, an air of the fantastic—approaching as nearly to the ludicrous as was admissible—is given to the Raven's entrance. He comes in "with many a flirt and flutter."

Not the *least obeisance made he*—not a moment stopped  
or stayed he,  
But with *mien of lord or lady*, perched above my chamber  
door.

In the two stanzas which follow, the design is more obviously carried out:—

Then this ebony bird beguiling my sad fancy into smiling  
By the *grave and stern decorum of the countenance it wore*,  
"Though thy *crest be shorn and shaven* thou," I said, "art  
sure no craven,  
Ghastly grim and ancient Raven wandering from the  
nightly shore—  
Tell me what thy lordly name is on the Night's Plutonian  
shore?"

Quoth the Raven "Nevermore."

Much I marvelled *this ungainly fowl* to hear discourse so  
plainly  
Though its answer little meaning—little relevancy bore;  
For we cannot help agreeing that no living human being  
*Ever yet was blessed with seeing bird above his chamber  
door—*  
*Bird or beast upon the sculptured bust above his chamber  
door,*

With such name as "Nevermore."

The effect of the *dénouement* being thus provided for, I immediately drop the fantastic for a tone of the most profound seriousness:—this tone commencing in the stanza directly following the one last quoted, with the line,

But the Raven, sitting lonely on that placid bust, spoke  
only, etc.

From this epoch the lover no longer jests—no longer sees any thing even of the fantastic in the Raven's demeanor. He speaks of him as a "grim, ungainly, ghastly, gaunt, and ominous bird of yore," and feels the "fiery eyes" burning into his "bosom's core." This revolution of thought, or fancy, on the lover's part, is intended to induce a similar one on the part of the reader—to bring the mind into a proper frame for the *dénouement*—which is now brought about as rapidly and as *directly* as possible.

With the *dénouement* proper—with the Raven's reply, "Nevermore," to the lover's final demand if he shall meet his mistress in another world—the poem, in its obvious phase, that of a simple narrative, may be said to have its completion. So far, every thing is within the limits of the accountable—of the real. A raven, having learned by rote the single word "Nevermore," and having escaped from the custody of its owner, is driven at midnight, through the violence of a storm, to seek admission at a window from which a light still gleams—the chamber-window of a student, occupied half in poring over a volume, half in dreaming of a beloved mistress deceased. The casement being thrown open at the fluttering of the bird's wings, the bird itself perches on the most convenient seat out of the immediate reach of the student, who, amused by the incident and the oddity of the visitor's demeanor, demands of it, in jest and without looking for a reply, its name. The raven addressed, answers with its customary word, "Nevermore"—a word which finds immediate echo in the melancholy heart of the student, who, giving utterance aloud to certain thoughts suggested by the occasion, is again startled by the fowl's repetition of "Nevermore." The student now guesses the state of the case, but is impelled, as I have before explained, by the human thirst for self-torture, and in part by superstition, to propound such queries to the bird as will bring him, the lover, the most of the luxury of sorrow, through the anticipated answer "Nevermore." With the indulgence, to the extreme, of this self-torture, the narration, in what I have termed its first or obvious phase, has a natural termination, and so far there has been no overstepping of the limits of the real.

But in subjects so handled, however skilfully, or with however vivid an array of incident, there is always a certain hardness or nakedness, which repels the artistical eye. Two things are invariably required—first, some amount of complexity, or more properly, adaptation; and, secondly, some amount of suggestiveness—some under-current, however indefinite, of meaning. It is this latter, in especial, which imparts to a work of art so much of that *richness* (to borrow from colloquy a forcible term) which we are too fond of confounding with the *ideal*. It is the *excess* of the suggested meaning—it is the rendering this the upper instead of the under current of the theme—which turns into prose (and that of the very flattest kind)

the so called poetry of the so called transcendentalists.

Holding these opinions, I added the two concluding stanzas of the poem—their suggestiveness being thus made to pervade all the narrative which has preceded them. The under-current of meaning is rendered first apparent in the lines—

“Take thy beak from out *my heart*, and take thy form from off my door!”

Quoth the Raven “Nevermore!”

It will be observed that the words, “from out my heart,” involve the first metaphorical expression in the poem. They, with the answer, “Nevermore,” dispose the mind to seek a moral in all that has been

previously narrated. The reader begins now to regard the Raven as emblematical—but it is not until the very last line of the very last stanza, that the intention of making him emblematical of *Mournful and Never-ending Remembrance* is permitted distinctly to be seen:

And the Raven, never flitting, still is sitting, still is sitting,  
On the pallid bust of Pallas, just above my chamber door;  
And his eyes have all the seeming of a demon’s that is  
dreaming,

10 And the lamplight o’er him streaming throws his shadow  
on the floor;

And my soul *from out that shadow* that lies floating on the  
floor

Shall be lifted—nevermore.

1846

### *The Poetic Principle*<sup>199</sup>

In speaking of the Poetic Principle, I have no design to be either thorough or profound. While discussing, very much at random, the essentiality of what we call Poetry, my principal purpose will be to cite for consideration, some few of those minor English or American poems which best suit my own taste, or which, upon my own fancy, have left the most definite impression. By “minor poems” I mean, of course, poems of little length. And here, in the beginning, permit me to say a few words in regard to a somewhat peculiar principle, which, whether rightfully or wrongfully, has always had its influence in my own critical estimate of the poem. I hold that a long poem does not exist. I maintain that the phrase, “a long poem,” is simply a flat contradiction in terms.

I need scarcely observe that a poem deserves its title only inasmuch as it excites, by elevating the soul. The value of the poem is in the ratio of this elevating excitement. But all excitements are, through a psychal<sup>200</sup> necessity, transient. That degree of excitement which would entitle a poem to be so called at all, cannot be sustained throughout a composition of any great length. After the lapse of half an hour, at the very utmost, it flags—fails—a revulsion ensues—and then the poem is, in effect, and in fact, no longer such.

<sup>199</sup> First printed in *Sartain’s Union Magazine*, October, 1850, but previously (1848–49) delivered at Lowell, Providence, Richmond, and elsewhere as a lecture.

<sup>200</sup> That is, psychological.

There are, no doubt, many who have found difficulty in reconciling the critical dictum that the “Paradise Lost” is to be devoutly admired throughout, with the absolute impossibility of maintaining for it, during perusal, the amount of enthusiasm which that critical dictum would demand. This great work, in fact, is to be regarded as poetical, only when, losing sight of that vital requisite in all works of Art, Unity, we view it merely as a series of minor poems. If, to preserve its Unity—its totality of effect or impression—we read it (as would be necessary) at a single sitting, the result is but a constant alternation of excitement and depression. After a passage of what we feel to be true poetry, there follows, inevitably, a passage of platitude which no critical pre-  
30 judgment can force us to admire; but if, upon completing the work, we read it again; omitting the first book—that is to say, commencing with the second—we shall be surprised at now finding that admirable which we before condemned—that damnable which we had previously so much admired. It follows from all this that the ultimate, aggregate, or absolute effect of even the best epic under the sun, is a nullity:—and this is precisely the fact.

In regard to the *Iliad*, we have, if not positive proof, at least very good reason, for believing it intended as a series of lyrics; but, granting the epic intention, I can say only that the work is based in an imperfect sense of art. The modern epic is, of the supposititious ancient model, but an inconsiderable

crate and blindfold imitation. But the day of these artistic anomalies is over. If, at any time, any very long poem were popular in reality, which I doubt, it is at least clear that no very long poem will ever be popular again.

That the extent of a poetical work is, *ceteris paribus*,<sup>201</sup> the measure of its merit, seems undoubtedly, when we thus state it, a proposition sufficiently absurd—yet we are indebted for it to the Quarterly Reviews. Surely there can be nothing in mere *size*,<sup>10</sup> abstractly considered—there can be nothing in mere *bulk*, so far as a volume is concerned, which has so continuously elicited admiration from these saturnine pamphlets! A mountain, to be sure, by the mere sentiment of physical magnitude which it conveys, *does* impress us with a sense of the sublime—but no man is impressed after *this* fashion by the material grandeur of even “The Columbiad.”<sup>202</sup> Even the Quarterlies have not instructed us to be so impressed by it. As yet, they have not *insisted* on our estimating<sup>20</sup> Lamartine<sup>203</sup> by the cubic foot, or Pollok<sup>204</sup> by the pound—but what else are we to *infer* from their continual prating about “sustained effort?” If, by “sustained effort,” any little gentleman has accomplished an epic, let us frankly commend him for the effort—if this indeed be a thing commendable—but let us forbear praising the epic on the effort’s account. It is to be hoped that common sense, in the time to come, will prefer deciding upon a work of art, rather by the impression it makes, by the effect it produces,<sup>30</sup> than by the time it took to impress the effect or by the amount of “sustained effort” which had been found necessary in effecting the impression. The fact is, that perseverance is one thing, and genius quite another—nor can all the Quarterlies in Christendom confound them. By-and-by, this proposition, with many which I have been just urging, will be received as self-evident. In the meantime, by being generally condemned as falsities, they will not be essentially damaged as truths.

On the other hand, it is clear that a poem may be improperly brief. Undue brevity degenerates into mere epigrammatism. A very short poem, while now

and then producing a brilliant or vivid, never produces a profound or enduring effect. There must be the steady pressing down of the stamp upon the wax. De Béranger has wrought innumerable things, pungent and spirit-stirring; but, in general, they have been too imponderous to stamp themselves deeply into the public attention; and thus, as so many feathers of fancy, have been blown aloft only to be whistled down the wind. . . .

While the epic mania—while the idea that, to merit in poetry, prolixity is indispensable—has, for some years past, been gradually dying out of the public mind, by mere dint of its own absurdity—we find it succeeded by a heresy too palpably false to be long tolerated, but one which, in the brief period it has already endured, may be said to have accomplished more in the corruption of our Poetical Literature than all its other enemies combined. I allude to the heresy of *The Didactic*. It has been assumed, tacitly and avowedly, directly and indirectly, that the ultimate object of all Poetry is Truth. Every poem, it is said, should inculcate a moral; and by this moral is the poetical merit of the work to be adjudged. We Americans especially have patronised this happy idea; and we Bostonians, very especially, have developed it in full. We have taken it into our heads that to write a poem simply for the poem’s sake, and to acknowledge such to have been our design, would be to confess ourselves radically wanting in the true Poetic dignity and force:—but the simple fact is, that, would we but permit ourselves to look into our own souls, we should immediately there discover that under the sun there neither exists nor *can* exist any work more thoroughly dignified—more supremely noble than this very poem—this poem *per se*—this poem which is a poem and nothing more—this poem written solely for the poem’s sake.

With as deep a reverence for the True as ever inspired the bosom of man, I would, nevertheless,<sup>40</sup> limit, in some measure, its modes of inculcation. I would limit to enforce them. I would not enfeeble them by dissipation. The demands of Truth are severe. She has no sympathy with the myrtles.<sup>205</sup> All *that* which is so indispensable in Song, is precisely all *that* with which *she* has nothing whatever to do. It is but making her a flaunting paradox, to wreath her in gems and flowers. In enforcing a truth, we need

<sup>201</sup> Other things being equal.

<sup>202</sup> Joel Barlow’s ambitious epic poem published in 1807.

<sup>203</sup> Alphonse de Lamartine (1790–1827), a French poet and critic, author of *Méditations poétiques* (1820), distinguished for his style as well as voluminousness.

<sup>204</sup> Robert Pollok (1798?–1827), a Scottish religious poet, author of a long didactic poem, *The Course of Time* (1827), generally regarded as unreadable.

<sup>205</sup> Here loosely associated with Apollo and the Muses as the deities of poetry.

severity rather than efflorescence of language. We must be simple, precise, terse. We must be cool, calm, unimpassioned. In a word, we must be in that mood which, as nearly as possible, is the exact converse of the poetical. *He* must be blind, indeed, who does not perceive the radical and chasmal differences between the truthful and the poetical modes of inculcation. He must be theory-mad beyond redemption who, in spite of these differences, shall still persist in attempting to reconcile the obstinate oils and waters of Poetry and Truth.

Dividing the world of mind into its three most immediately obvious distinctions, we have the Pure Intellect, Taste, and the Moral Sense. I place Taste in the middle, because it is just this position which, in the mind, it occupies. It holds intimate relations with either extreme; but from the Moral Sense is separated by so faint a difference that Aristotle has not hesitated to place some of its operations among the virtues themselves.<sup>206</sup> Nevertheless, we find the offices of the trio marked with a sufficient distinction. Just as the Intellect concerns itself with Truth, so Taste informs us of the Beautiful while the Moral Sense is regardful of Duty. Of this latter, while Conscience teaches the obligation, and Reason the expediency, Taste contents herself with displaying the charms:—waging war upon Vice solely on the ground of her deformity—her disproportion—her animosity to the fitting, to the appropriate, to the harmonious—in a word, to Beauty.

An immortal instinct, deep within the spirit of man, is thus, plainly, a sense of the Beautiful. This it is which administers to his delight in the manifold forms, and sounds, and odours, and sentiments amid which he exists. And just as the lily is repeated in the lake, or the eyes of Amaryllis in the mirror, so is the mere oral or written repetition of these forms, and sounds, and colours, and odours, and sentiments, a duplicate source of delight. But this mere repetition is not poetry. He who shall simply sing, with however glowing enthusiasm, or with however vivid a truth of description, of the sights, and sounds, and odours, and colours, and sentiments, which greet *him* in common with all mankind—he, I say, has yet failed to prove his divine title. There is still a something in the distance which he has been unable to attain. We have still a thirst unquenchable, to allay which he has not shown us the crystal springs. This

<sup>206</sup> A reference to the *Nicomachean Ethics* of Aristotle.

thirst belongs to the immortality of Man. It is at once a consequence and an indication of his perennial existence. It is the desire of the moth for the star.<sup>207</sup> It is no mere appreciation of the Beauty before us—but a wild effort to reach the Beauty above. Inspired by an ecstatic prescience of the glories beyond the grave, we struggle, by multifarious combinations among the things and thoughts of Time, to attain a portion of that Loveliness whose very elements, perhaps, appertain to eternity alone. And thus when by Poetry—or when by Music, the most entrancing of the Poetic moods—we find ourselves melted into tears—we weep then—not as the Abbate Gravina<sup>208</sup> supposes—through excess of pleasure, but through a certain, petulant, impatient sorrow at our inability to grasp *now*, wholly, here on earth, at once and for ever, those divine and rapturous joys, of which *through* the poem, or *through* the music, we attain to but brief and indeterminate glimpses.

The struggle to apprehend the supernal Loveliness—this struggle, on the part of souls fittingly constituted—has given to the world all *that* which it (the world) has ever been enabled at once to understand and to *feel* as poetic.

The Poetic Sentiment, of course, may develop itself in various modes—in Painting, in Sculpture, in Architecture, in the Dance—very especially in Music—and very peculiarly, and with a wide field, in the composition of the Landscape Garden. Our present theme, however, has regard only to its manifestation in words. And here let me speak briefly on the topic of rhythm. Contenting myself with the certainty that Music, in its various modes of metre, rhythm, and rhyme, is of so vast a moment in Poetry as never to be wisely rejected—is so vitally important an adjunct, that he is simply silly who declines its assistance, I will not pause to maintain its absolute essentiality. It is in Music, perhaps, that the soul most nearly attains the great end for which, when inspired by the Poetic Sentiment, it struggles—the creation of supernal Beauty. It *may* be, indeed, that here this sublime end is, now and then, attained *in fact*. We are often made to feel, with a shivering delight, that from an earthly harp are stricken notes which *cannot*

<sup>207</sup> The line, "The desire of the moth for the star," occurs as line 13 in Shelley's poem beginning "One word is too often profaned."

<sup>208</sup> Giovanni Vincenzo Gravina (1664–1718), founder of the Arcadian Academy, writer of several tragedies and of a critical work on poetry, *Della ragion poetica libra due* (1718).

have been unfamiliar to the angels. And thus there can be little doubt that in the union of Poetry with Music in its popular sense, we shall find the widest field for the Poetic development. The old Bards and Minnesingers had advantages which we do not possess—and Thomas Moore,<sup>209</sup> singing his own songs, was, in the most legitimate manner, perfecting them as poems.

To recapitulate, then:—I would define, in brief, the Poetry of words as *The Rhythmical Creation of Beauty*. Its sole arbiter is Taste. With the intellect or with the Conscience, it has only collateral relations. Unless incidentally, it has no concern whatever either with Duty or with Truth.

A few words, however, in explanation. *That* pleasure which is at once the most pure, the most elevating, and the most intense, is derived, I maintain, from the contemplation of the Beautiful. In the contemplation of Beauty we alone find it possible to attain that pleasurable elevation, or excitement, of *the soul*, which we recognise as the Poetic Sentiment, and which is so easily distinguished from Truth, which is the satisfaction of the Reason, or from Passion, which is the excitement of the heart. I make Beauty, therefore—using the word as inclusive of the sublime—I make Beauty the province of the poem, simply because it is an obvious rule of Art that effects should be made to spring as directly as possible from their causes:—no one as yet having been weak enough to deny that the peculiar elevation in question is at least *most readily* attainable in the poem. It by no means follows, however, that the incitements of Passion, or the precepts of Duty, or even the lessons of Truth, may not be introduced into a poem, and with advantage; for they may subserve, incidentally, in various ways, the general purposes of the work:—but the true artist will always contrive to tone them down in proper subjection to that *Beauty* which is the atmosphere and the real essence of the poem. . . .

Thus, although in a very cursory and imperfect manner, I have endeavoured to convey to you my conception of the Poetic Principle. It has been my purpose to suggest that, while this Principle itself is, strictly and simply, the Human Aspiration for Supernal Beauty, the manifestation of the Principle is always found in *an elevating excitement of the Soul*

<sup>209</sup> Thomas Moore (1779–1852) liked to sing his songs set to his own music.

—quite independent of that passion which is the intoxication of the Heart—or of that Truth which is the satisfaction of the Reason. For, in regard to Passion, alas! its tendency is to degrade, rather than to elevate the Soul. Love, on the contrary—Love—the true, the divine Eros—the Uranian, as distinguished from the Dionæan Venus<sup>210</sup>—is unquestionably the purest and truest of all poetical themes. And in regard to Truth—if, to be sure, through the attainment of a truth, we are led to perceive a harmony where none was apparent before, we experience, at once, the true poetical effect—but this effect is referable to the harmony alone, and not in the least degree to the truth which merely served to render the harmony manifest.

We shall reach, however, more immediately a distinct conception of what the true Poetry is, by mere reference to a few of the simple elements which induce in the Poet himself the true poetical effect. He recognises the ambrosia which nourishes his soul, in the bright orbs that shine in Heaven—in the volutes<sup>211</sup> of the flower—in the clustering of low shrubberies—in the waving of the grain-fields—in the slanting of tall, Eastern trees—in the blue distance of mountains—in the grouping of clouds—in the twinkling of half-hidden brooks—in the gleaming of silver rivers—in the repose of sequestered lakes—in the star-mirroring depths of lonely wells. He perceives it in the songs of birds—in the harp of Æolus<sup>212</sup>—in the sighing of the night-wind—in the repining voice of the forest—in the surf that complains to the shore—in the fresh breath of the woods—in the scent of the violet—in the voluptuous perfume of the hyacinth—in the suggestive odour that comes to him, at eventide, from far-distant, undiscovered islands, over dim oceans, illimitable and unexplored. He owns it in all noble thoughts—in all unworldly motives—in all holy impulses—in all chivalrous, generous, and self-sacrificing deeds. He feels it in the beauty of woman—in the grace of her step—in the lustre of her eye—in the melody of her voice—in her soft laughter—in her sigh—in the harmony of the rustling of her robes. He deeply feels it in her winning endearments—in her burning enthusiasms—

<sup>210</sup> Eros, or Cupid, as a type of celestial love. Uranian means celestial. Poe apparently considers the Dionæan Venus, in the sense of earthly love, opposed to the Uranian Venus.

<sup>211</sup> Convolutions.

<sup>212</sup> The Æolian harp, on which the winds played music, is the standard type of spontaneous musical and poetical inspiration among romanticists.

in her gentle charities—in her meek and devotional endurances—but above all—ah, far above all—he kneels to it—he worships it in the faith, in the purity, in the strength, in the altogether divine majesty—of her *love*.

Let me conclude—by the recitation of yet another brief poem—one very different in character from any that I have before quoted. It is by Motherwell,<sup>213</sup> and is called “The Song of the Cavalier.” With our modern and altogether rational ideas of the absurdity<sup>10</sup> and impiety of warfare, we are not precisely in that frame of mind best adapted to sympathise with the sentiments, and thus to appreciate the real excellence

of the poem. To do this fully, we must identify ourselves, in fancy, with the soul of the old cavalier.

Then mount! then mount, brave gallants, all,  
And don your helmes amaine:  
Deathe's couriers, Fame and Honour, call  
Us to the field againe.  
No shrewish teares shall fill our eye  
When the sword-hilt 's in our hand,—  
Heart-whole we 'll part, and no whit sighe  
For the fayrest of the land;  
Let piping swaine, and craven wight,  
Thus weepe and puling crye,  
Our business is like men to fight,  
And hero-like to die!

FROM

*Eureka*:<sup>214</sup>

AN ESSAY ON THE MATERIAL AND SPIRITUAL  
UNIVERSE

It is with humility really unassumed—it is with a sentiment even of awe—that I pen the opening sentence of this work: for of all conceivable subjects I approach the reader with the most solemn—the most comprehensive—the most difficult—the most august.

What terms shall I find sufficiently simple in their<sup>20</sup> sublimity—sufficiently sublime in their simplicity—for the mere enunciation of my theme?

I design to speak of the *Physical, Metaphysical and Mathematical—of the Material and Spiritual Universe:—of its Essence, its Origin, its Creation, its Present Condition and its Destiny*. I shall be so rash, moreover, as to challenge the conclusions, and thus, in effect, to question the sagacity, of many of the greatest and most justly revered of men.

In the beginning, let me as distinctly as possible<sup>30</sup> announce—not the theorem which I hope to demonstrate—for, whatever the mathematicians may assert, there is, in this world at least, *no such thing* as demonstration—but the ruling idea which, throughout this volume, I shall be continually endeavoring to suggest.

My general proposition, then, is this:—*In the*

*Original Unity of the First Thing lies the Secondary Cause of All Things, with the Germ of their Inevitable Annihilation.*

In illustration of this idea, I propose to take such a survey of the Universe that the mind may be able really to receive and to perceive an individual im-

pression.  
He who from the top of Ætna casts his eyes leisurely around, is affected chiefly by the *extent* and *diversity* of the scene. Only by a rapid whirling on his heel could he hope to comprehend the panorama in the sublimity of its *oneness*. But as, on the summit of Ætna, *no* man has thought of whirling on his heel, so *no* man has ever taken into his brain the full uniqueness of the prospect; and so, again, whatever considerations lie involved in this uniqueness, have as yet no practical existence for mankind.

I do not know a treatise in which a survey of the *Universe*—using the word in its most comprehensive and only legitimate acceptation—is taken at all:—and it may be as well here to mention that by the term “Universe,” wherever employed without qualification in this essay, I mean to designate *the utmost conceivable expanse of space, with all things, spiritual and material, that can be imagined to exist within the compass of that expanse*. In speaking of what is<sup>40</sup> ordinarily implied by the expression, “Universe,” I shall take a phrase of limitation—“the Universe of

<sup>213</sup> William Motherwell (1797–1829), a Scottish poet and ballad-collector.

<sup>214</sup> Dedicated to Alexander von Humboldt, *Eureka* was published by George P. Putnam in New York in 1848.



stars." Why this distinction is considered necessary, will be seen in the sequel.

But even of treatises on the really limited, although always assumed as the *unlimited*, Universe of *stars*, I know none in which a survey, even of this limited Universe, is so taken as to warrant deductions from its *individuality*. The nearest approach to such a work is made in the "Cosmos" of Alexander Von Humboldt.<sup>215</sup> He presents the subject, however, *not* in its individuality but in its generality. His theme, in its last result, is the law of *each* portion of the merely physical Universe, as this law is related to the laws of *every other* portion of this merely physical Universe. His design is simply syncretical. In a word, he discusses the universality of material relation, and discloses to the eye of Philosophy whatever inferences have hitherto lain hidden *behind* this universality. But however admirable be the succinctness with which he has treated each particular point of his topic, the mere multiplicity of these points occasions, <sup>20</sup> necessarily, an amount of detail, and thus an involution of idea, which preclude all *individuality* of impression.

It seems to me that, in aiming at this latter effect, and, through it, at the consequences—the conclusions—the suggestions—the speculations—or, if nothing better offer itself, the mere guesses which may result from it—we require something like a mental gyration on the heel. We need so rapid a revolution of all things about the central point of sight that, while minutiae vanish altogether, even the more conspicuous objects become blended into one. Among the vanishing minutiae, in a survey of this kind, would be all exclusively terrestrial matters. The Earth would be considered in its planetary relations alone. A man, in this view, becomes mankind; mankind a member of the cosmical family of Intelligences. . . .

[Here follows an involved discourse on the logic of scientific discovery, and a consideration of a letter presumed to have been written in 1848 A.D., and designed to demonstrate the inadequacy of both Aristotelian deduction and Baconian induction. Instead, Poe argues, the intuitive processes of the mind are the only adequate media to truth, as consistency is the only test of truth. "A perfect consistency can be nothing but an absolute truth." Kepler, says Poe, was the only philosopher-cosmologist of the past whose theories, intuitively derived, are consistent within themselves. On these premises, Poe proceeds to the assumptions and hypotheses that follow. Such terms as "Infinity,"

<sup>215</sup> Humboldt (1769-1859). *Kosmos* was published in 1845-58.

"God," and "Spirit" are considered incomprehensible to the finite mind, because they belong to the class of "thoughts of thoughts."]

It will now be understood that, in using the phrase, "Infinity of Space," I make no call upon the reader to entertain the impossible conception of an *absolute* infinity. I refer simply to the "*utmost conceivable expanse*" of space—a shadowy and fluctuating domain, now shrinking, now swelling, in accordance with the vacillating energies of the imagination.

*Hitherto*, the Universe of stars has always been considered as coincident with the Universe proper, as I have defined it in the commencement of this Discourse. It has been always either directly or indirectly assumed—at least since the dawn of intelligible Astronomy—that, were it possible for us to attain any given point in space, we should still find, on all sides of us, an interminable succession of stars. This was the untenable idea of Pascal when making perhaps the most successful attempt ever made, at paraphrasing the conception for which we struggle in the word "Universe." "It is a sphere," he says, "of which the centre is everywhere, the circumference, nowhere." But although this intended definition is, in fact, *no* definition of the Universe of *stars*, we may accept it, with some mental reservation, as a definition (rigorous enough for all practical purposes) of the Universe *proper*—that is to say, of the Universe of *space*. This latter, then, let us regard as "*a sphere of which the centre is everywhere, the circumference nowhere*." In fact, while we find it impossible to fancy an *end* to space, we have no difficulty in picturing to ourselves any one of an infinity of *beginnings*.

As our starting point, then, let us adopt the *Godhead*. Of this Godhead, *in itself*, he alone is not imbecile—he alone is not impious who propounds—nothing. "*Nous ne connaissons rien*," says the Baron de Bielfeld<sup>216</sup>—"Nous ne connaissons rien de la nature ou de l'essence de Dieu:—pour savoir ce qu'il est, il faut être Dieu même."—"We know absolutely *nothing* of the nature or essence of God:—in order to comprehend what he is, we should have to be God ourselves."

"We should have to be God ourselves!"—With a phrase so startling as this yet ringing in my ears, I nevertheless venture to demand if this our present

<sup>216</sup> See the note on Bielfeld in Poe's review of Longfellow's *Ballads and Other Poems*.

ignorance of the Deity is an ignorance to which the soul is *everlastingly* condemned.

By *Him*, however—*now*, at least, the Incomprehensible—by *Him*—assuming him as *Spirit*—that is to say, as *not Matter*—a distinction which, for all intelligible purposes, will stand well instead of a definition—by *Him*, then, existing as *Spirit*, let us content ourselves, to-night, with supposing to have been *created*, or made out of Nothing, by dint of his Volition—at some point of Space which we will take 10 as a centre—at some period into which we do not pretend to inquire, but at all events immensely remote—by *Him*, then again, let us suppose to have been created—*what?* This is a vitally momentous epoch in our considerations. *What* is it that we are justified—that alone we are justified in supposing to have been, primarily and solely, *created?*

We have attained a point where only *Intuition* can aid us:—but now let me recur to the idea which I have already suggested as that alone which we can 20 properly entertain of intuition. It is but *the conviction arising from those inductions or deductions of which the processes are so shadowy as to escape our consciousness, elude our reason, or defy our capacity of expression*. With this understanding, I now assert—that an intuition altogether irresistible, although inexpressible, forces me to the conclusion that what God originally created—that that Matter which, by dint of his Volition, he first made from his Spirit, or from Nihilism, *could* have been nothing but Mat- 30 ter in its utmost conceivable state of—*what?*—of *Simplicity?*

This will be found the sole absolute *assumption* of my Discourse. I use the word “assumption” in its ordinary sense; yet I maintain that even this my primary proposition, is very, very far indeed, from being really a mere assumption. Nothing was ever more certainly—no human conclusion was ever, in fact, more regularly—more rigorously *deduced*:—but, alas! the processes lie out of the human analysis—at 40 all events are beyond the utterance of the human tongue.

Let us now endeavor to conceive what Matter must be, when, or if, in its absolute extreme of *Simplicity*. Here the Reason flies at once to Imparticularity—to a particle—to *one* particle—a particle of *one* kind—of *one* character—of *one* nature—of *one* size—of one form—a particle, therefore, “*without* form and void”—a particle positively a particle at all points—

a particle absolutely unique, individual, undivided, and not indivisible only because He who *created* it, by dint of his Will, can by an infinitely less energetic exercise of the same Will, as a matter of course, divide it.

*Oneness*, then, is all that I predicate of the originally created Matter; but I propose to show that this *Oneness* is a principle abundantly sufficient to account for the constitution, the existing *phænomena* and the plainly inevitable annihilation of at least the material Universe.

The willing into being the primordial particle, has completed the act, or more properly the *conception*, of Creation. We now proceed to the ultimate purpose for which we are to suppose the Particle created—that is to say, the ultimate purpose so far as our considerations yet enable us to see it—the constitution of the Universe from it, the Particle.

This constitution has been effected by *forcing* the originally and therefore normally *One* into the abnormal condition of *Many*. An action of this character implies reaction. A diffusion from Unity, under the conditions, involves a tendency to return into Unity—a tendency ineradicable until satisfied. But on these points I will speak more fully hereafter.

The assumption of absolute Unity in the primordial Particle includes that of infinite divisibility. Let us conceive the Particle, then, to be only not totally exhausted by diffusion into Space. From the one Particle, as a centre, let us suppose to be irradiated spherically—in all directions—to immeasurable but still to definite distances in the previously vacant space—a certain inexpressibly great yet limited number of unimaginably yet not infinitely minute atoms.

Now, of these atoms, thus diffused, or upon diffusion, what conditions are we permitted—not to assume, but to infer, from consideration as well of their source as of the character of the design apparent in their diffusion? *Unity* being their source, and *difference from Unity* the character of the design manifested in their diffusion, we are warranted in supposing this character to be at least *generally* preserved throughout the design, and to form a portion of the design itself:—that is to say, we shall be warranted in conceiving continual differences at all points from the unicity and simplicity of the origin. But, for these reasons, shall we be justified in imagining the atoms heterogeneous, dissimilar, unequal, and inequidistant? More explicitly—are we to consider no two atoms as,

at their diffusion, of the same nature, or of the same form, or of the same size?—and, after fulfilment of their diffusion into Space, is absolute inequidistance, each from each, to be understood of all of them? In such arrangement, under such conditions, we most easily and immediately comprehend the subsequent most feasible carrying out to completion of any such design as that which I have suggested—the design of variety out of unity—diversity out of sameness—heterogeneity out of homogeneity—complexity out of simplicity—in a word, the utmost possible multiplicity of *relation* out of the emphatically irrelative *One*. Undoubtedly, therefore, we *should* be warranted in assuming all that has been mentioned, but for the reflection, first, that supererogation is not presumable of any Divine Act; and, secondly, that the object supposed in view, appears as feasible when some of the conditions in question are dispensed with, in the beginning, as when all are understood immediately to exist. I mean to say that some are involved in the rest, or so instantaneous a consequence of them as to make the distinction inappreciable. Difference of *size*, for example, will at once be brought about through the tendency of one atom to a second, in preference to a third, on account of particular inequidistance; which is to be comprehended as *particular inequidistances between centres of quantity, in neighboring atoms of different form*—a matter not at all interfering with the generally-equable distribution of the atoms. Difference of *kind*, too, is easily conceived to be merely a result of differences in size and form, taken more or less conjointly:—in fact, since the *Unity* of the Particle Proper implies absolute homogeneity, we cannot imagine the atoms, at their diffusion, differing in kind, without imagining, at the same time, a special exercise of the Divine Will, at the emission of each atom, for the purpose of effecting, in each, a change of its essential nature:—so fantastic an idea is the less to be indulged, as the object proposed is seen to be thoroughly attainable without such minute and elaborate interposition. We perceive, therefore, upon the whole, that it would be supererogatory, and consequently unphilosophical, to predicate of the atoms, in view of their purposes, any thing more than *difference of form* at their dispersion, with particular inequidistance after it—all other differences arising at once out of these, in the very first processes of mass-constitution:—We thus establish the Universe on a purely *geometrical*

basis. Of course, it is by no means necessary to assume absolute difference, even of form, among *all* the atoms irradiated—any more than absolute particular inequidistance of each from each. We are required to conceive merely that no *neighboring* atoms are of similar form—no atoms which can ever approximate, until their inevitable reunion at the end.

Although the immediate and perpetual *tendency* of the disunited atoms to return into their normal Unity, is implied, as I have said, in their abnormal diffusion; still it is clear that this tendency will be without consequence—a tendency and no more—until the diffusive energy, in ceasing to be exerted, shall leave *it*, the tendency, free to seek its satisfaction. The Divine Act, however, being considered as determinate, and discontinued on fulfilment of the diffusion, we understand, at once, a *reaction*—in other words, a *satisfiable* tendency of the disunited atoms to return into *One*.

But the diffusive energy being withdrawn, and the reaction having commenced in furtherance of the ultimate design—that of the *utmost possible Relation*—this design is now in danger of being frustrated, in detail, by reason of that very tendency to return which is to effect its accomplishment in general. *Multiplicity* is the object; but there is nothing to prevent proximate atoms from lapsing *at once*, through the now satisfiable tendency—*before* the fulfilment of any ends proposed in multiplicity—into absolute oneness among themselves:—there is nothing to impede the aggregation of various *unique* masses, at various points of space:—in other words, nothing to interfere with the accumulation of various masses, each absolutely *One*.

For the effectual and thorough completion of the general design, we thus see the necessity for a repulsion of limited capacity—a separate *something* which, on withdrawal of the diffusive Volition, shall at the same time allow the approach, and forbid the junction, of the atoms; suffering them infinitely to approximate, while denying them positive contact; in a word, having the power—*up to a certain epoch*—of preventing their *coalition*, but no ability to interfere with their *coalescence* in any respect or *degree*. The repulsion, already considered as so peculiarly limited in other regards, must be understood, let me repeat, as having power to prevent absolute coalition, *only up to a certain epoch*. Unless we are to conceive that

the appetite for Unity among the atoms is doomed to be satisfied *never*;—unless we are to conceive that what had a beginning is to have no end—a conception which cannot *really* be entertained, however much we may talk or dream of entertaining it—we are forced to conclude that the repulsive influence imagined, will, finally—under pressure of the *Unitendency collectively* applied, but never and in no degree *until*, on fulfilment of the Divine purposes, such collective application shall be naturally made—<sup>10</sup> yield to a force which, at that ultimate epoch, shall be the superior force precisely to the extent required, and thus permit the universal subsidence into the inevitable, because original and therefore normal, *One*.—The conditions here to be reconciled are difficult indeed:—we cannot even comprehend the possibility of their conciliation;—nevertheless, the apparent impossibility is brilliantly suggestive.

That the repulsive something actually exists, we *see*. Man neither employs, nor knows, a force suffi-<sup>20</sup> cient to bring two atoms into contact. This is but the well-established proposition of the impenetrability of matter. All Experiment proves—all Philosophy admits it. The *design* of the repulsion—the necessity for its existence—I have endeavored to show; but from all attempt at investigating its nature have religiously abstained; this on account of an intuitive conviction that the principle at issue is strictly spiritual—lies in a recess impervious to our present understanding—lies involved in a consideration of <sup>30</sup> what now—in our human state—is *not* to be considered—in a consideration of *Spirit in itself*. I feel, in a word, that here the God has interposed, and here only, because here and here only the knot demanded the interposition of the God.

In fact, while the tendency of the diffused atoms to return into Unity, will be recognized, at once, as the principle of the Newtonian Gravity, what I have spoken of as a repulsive influence prescribing limits to the (immediate) satisfaction of the tendency, will <sup>40</sup> be understood as *that* which we have been in the practice of designating now as heat, now as magnetism, now as *electricity*; displaying our ignorance of its awful character in the vacillation of the phraseology with which we endeavor to circumscribe it.

Calling it, merely for the moment, electricity, we know that all experimental analysis of electricity has given, as an ultimate result, the principle, or seeming principle, *heterogeneity*. Only where things differ

is electricity apparent; and it is presumable that they *never* differ where it is not developed at least, if not apparent. Now, this result is in the fullest keeping with that which I have reached unempirically. The design of the repulsive influence I have maintained to be that of preventing immediate Unity among the diffused atoms; and these atoms are represented as different each from each. *Difference* is their character—their essentiality—just as *no-difference* was the essentiality of their course. When we say, then, that an attempt to bring any two of these atoms together would induce an effort, on the part of the repulsive influence, to prevent the contact, we may as well use the strictly convertible sentence that an attempt to bring together any two differences will result in a development of electricity. All existing bodies, of course, are composed of these atoms in proximate contact, and are therefore to be considered as mere assemblages of more or fewer differences; and the resistance made by the repulsive spirit, on bringing together any two such assemblages, would be in the ratio of the two sums of the differences in each:—an expression which, when reduced, is equivalent to this:—*The amount of electricity developed on the approximation of two bodies, is proportional to the difference between the respective sums of the atoms of which the bodies are composed.* That *no* two bodies are absolutely alike, is a simple corollary from all that has been here said. Electricity, therefore, existing always, is *developed* whenever *any* bodies, but *manifested* only when bodies of appreciable difference, are brought into approximation.

To electricity—so, for the present, continuing to call it—we *may* not be wrong in referring the various physical appearances of light, heat and magnetism; but far less shall we be liable to err in attributing to this strictly spiritual principle the more important phænomena of vitality, consciousness and *Thought*. On this topic, however, I need pause *here* merely to suggest that these phænomena, whether observed generally or in detail, seem to proceed *at least in the ratio of the heterogeneous*.

Discarding now the two equivocal terms, “gravitation” and “electricity,” let us adopt the more definite expressions, “*attraction*” and “*repulsion*.” The former is the body; the latter the soul: the one is the material; the other the spiritual, principle of the Universe. *No other principles exist.* All phænomena are referable to one, or to the other, or to both com-

bined. So rigorously is this the case—so thoroughly demonstrable is it that attraction and repulsion are the *sole* properties through which we perceive the Universe—in other words, by which Matter is manifested to Mind—that, for all merely argumentative purposes, we are fully justified in assuming that matter *exists* only as attraction and repulsion—that attraction and repulsion *are* matter:—there being no conceivable case in which we may not employ the term “matter” and the terms “attraction” and “re-<sup>10</sup> pulsion,” taken together, as equivalent, and therefore convertible, expressions in Logic.

I said, just now, that what I have described as the tendency of the diffused atoms to return into their original unity, would be understood as the principle of the Newtonian law of gravity: and, in fact, there can be but little difficulty in such an understanding, if we look at the Newtonian gravity in a merely general view, as a force impelling matter to seek matter; that is to say, when we pay no attention to the <sup>20</sup> known *modus operandi* of the Newtonian force. The general coincidence satisfies us; but, upon looking closely, we see, in detail, much that appears *incoincident*, and much in regard to which no coincidence, at least, is established. For example; the Newtonian gravity, when we think of it in certain moods, does *not* seem to be a tendency to *oneness* at all, but rather a tendency of all bodies in all directions—a phrase apparently expressive of a tendency to diffusion. Here, then, is an *incoincidence*. Again; when <sup>30</sup> we reflect on the mathematical *law* governing the Newtonian tendency, we see clearly that no coincidence has been made good, in respect of the *modus operandi*, at least, between gravitation as known to exist and that seemingly simple and direct tendency which I have assumed.

In fact, I have attained a point at which it will be advisable to strengthen my position by reversing my processes. So far, we have gone on *à priori*, from an abstract consideration of *Simplicity*, as that qual-<sup>40</sup> ity most likely to have characterized the original action of God. Let us now see whether the established facts of the Newtonian Gravitation may not afford us, *à posteriori*, some legitimate inductions.

What does the Newtonian law declare?—That all bodies attract each other with forces proportional to their quantities of matter and inversely proportional to the squares of their distances. Purposely, I have

here given, in the first place, the vulgar version of the law; and I confess that in this, as in most other vulgar versions of great truths, we find little of a suggestive character. Let us now adopt a more philosophical phrasology:—*Every atom, of every body, attracts every other atom, both of its own and of every other body, with a force which varies inversely as the squares of the distances between the attracting and attracted atom.*—Here, indeed, a flood of sugges-<sup>10</sup> tion bursts upon the mind.

But let us see distinctly what it was that Newton *proved*—according to the grossly irrational definitions of *proof* prescribed by the metaphysical schools. He was forced to content himself with showing how thoroughly the motions of an imaginary Universe, composed of attracting and attracted atoms obedient to the law he announced, coincide with those of the actually existing Universe so far as it comes under our observation. This was the amount of his *demon-*<sup>20</sup> *stration*—that is to say, this was the amount of it, according to the conventional cant of the “philosophies.” His successes added proof multiplied by proof—such proof as a sound intellect admits—but the *demonstration* of the law itself, persist the metaphysicians, had not been strengthened in any degree. “*Ocular, physical proof,*” however, of attraction, here upon Earth, in accordance with the Newtonian theory, was, at length, much to the satisfaction of some intellectual grovellers, afforded. This proof arose col-<sup>30</sup> laterally and incidentally (as nearly all important truths have arisen) out of an attempt to ascertain the mean density of the Earth. In the famous Maskelyne,<sup>217</sup> Cavendish<sup>218</sup> and Bailly<sup>219</sup> experiments for this purpose, the attraction of the mass of a mountain was seen, felt, measured, and found to be mathematically consistent with the immortal theory of the British astronomer.

But in spite of this confirmation of that which needed none—in spite of the so-called corroboration of the “theory” by the so-called “ocular and physical proof”—in spite of the *character* of this corroboration—the ideas which even really philosophical men cannot help imbibing of gravity—and, especially, the ideas of it which ordinary men get and contentedly maintain, are *seen* to have been derived, for the most

<sup>217</sup> Nevil Maskelyne (1732–1811), English astronomer.

<sup>218</sup> Henry Cavendish (1731–1810), English chemist and physicist.

<sup>219</sup> Jean Sylvain Bailly (1736–93), French astronomer.

part, from a consideration of the principle as they find it developed—*merely in the planet upon which they stand*.

Now, to what does so partial a consideration tend—to what species of error does it give rise? On the Earth we *see* and *feel*, only that gravity impels all bodies toward the *centre* of the Earth. No man in the common walks of life could be *made* to see or feel anything else—could be made to perceive that anything, anywhere, has a perpetual, gravitating tendency in any *other* direction than to the centre of the Earth; yet (with an exception hereafter to be specified) it is a fact that every earthly thing (not to speak now of every heavenly thing) has a tendency not *only* to the Earth's centre but in every conceivable direction besides.

Now, although the philosophic cannot be said to *err* with the vulgar in this matter, they nevertheless permit themselves to be influenced, without knowing it, by the *sentiment* of the vulgar idea. "Although the Pagan fables are not believed," says Bryant,<sup>220</sup> in his very erudite "Mythology," "yet we forget ourselves continually and make inferences from them as from existing realities." I mean to assert that the merely *sensitive perception* of gravity as we experience it on Earth, beguiles mankind into the fancy of *concentralization* or *especiality* respecting it—has been continually biasing towards this fancy even the mightiest intellects—perpetually, although imperceptibly, leading them away from the real characteristics of the principle; thus preventing them, up to this date, from ever getting a glimpse of that vital truth which lies in a diametrically opposite direction—behind the principle's *essential* characteristics—those, *not* of *concentralization* or *especiality*—but of *universality* and *diffusion*. This "vital truth" is *Unity* as the source of the phenomenon.

Let me now repeat the definition of gravity:—*Every atom, of every body, attracts every other atom, both of its own and of every other body*, with a force which varies inversely as the squares of the distances of the attracting and attracted atom.

Here let the reader pause with me, for a moment, in contemplation of the miraculous—of the ineffable—of the altogether unimaginable complexity of relation involved in the fact that *each atom attracts every other atom*—involved merely in this fact of the at-

traction, without reference to the law or mode in which the attraction is manifested—involved *merely* in the fact that each atom attracts every other atom *at all*, in a wilderness of atoms so numerous that those which go to the composition of a cannon-ball, exceed, probably, in mere point of number, all the stars which go to the constitution of the Universe.

Had we discovered, simply, that each atom tended to some one favorite point—to some especially attractive atom—we should still have fallen upon a discovery which, in itself, would have sufficed to overwhelm the mind:—but what is it that we are actually called upon to comprehend? That each atom attracts—sympathizes with the most delicate movements of every other atom, and with each and with all at the same time, and forever, and according to a determinate law of which the complexity, even considered by itself solely, is utterly beyond the grasp of the imagination of man. If I propose to ascertain the influence of one mote in a sunbeam upon its neighboring mote, I cannot accomplish my purpose without first counting and weighing all the atoms in the Universe and defining the precise positions of all at one particular moment. If I venture to displace, by even the billionth part of an inch, the microscopical speck of dust which lies now upon the point of my finger, what is the character of that act upon which I have adventured? I have done a deed which shakes the Moon in her path, which causes the Sun to be no longer the Sun, and which alters forever the destiny of the multitudinous myriads of stars that roll and glow in the majestic presence of their Creator.

*These* ideas—conceptions such as *these*—unthought-like thoughts—soul-reveries rather than conclusions or even considerations of the intellect:—ideas, I repeat, such as these, are such as we can alone hope profitably to entertain in any effort at grasping the great principle, *Attraction*.

But now,—*with* such ideas—with such a *vision* of the marvellous complexity of Attraction fairly in his mind—let any person competent of thought on such topics as these, set himself to the task of imagining a *principle* for the phenomena observed—a condition from which they sprang.

Does not so evident a brotherhood among the atoms point to a common parentage? Does not a sympathy so omnipresent, so ineradicable, and so

<sup>220</sup> Joseph Bryant (1715–1804), English antiquary.

thoroughly irrespective, suggest a common paternity as its source? Does not one extreme impel the reason to the other? Does not the infinitude of division refer to the utterness of individuality? Does not the entireness of the complex hint at the perfection of the simple? It is *not* that the atoms, as we see them, are divided or that they are complex in their relations—but that they are inconceivably divided and unutterably complex:—it is the extremeness of the conditions to which I now allude, rather than to the conditions themselves. In a word, not because the atoms were, at some remote epoch of time, even *more than together*—is it not because originally, and therefore normally, they were *One*—that now, in all circumstances—at all points—in all directions—by all modes of approach—in all relations and through all conditions—they struggle *back* to this absolutely, this irrelatively, this unconditionally *one*?

Some person may here demand:—“Why—since it is to the *One* that the atoms struggle back—do we not find and define Attraction ‘a merely general tendency to a centre?’—why, in especial, do not your atoms—the atoms which you describe as having been irradiated from a centre—proceed at once, rectilinearly, back to the central point of their origin?”

I reply that *they do*; as will be distinctly shown; but that the cause of their so doing is quite irrespective of the centre *as such*. They all tend rectilinearly towards a centre, because of the sphericity with which they have been irradiated into space. Each atom, forming one of a generally uniform globe of atoms, finds more atoms in the direction of the centre, of course, than in any other, and in that direction, therefore, is impelled—but is *not* thus impelled because the centre is *the point of its origin*. It is not to any *point* that the atoms are allied. It is not any *locality*, either in the concrete or in the abstract, to which I suppose them bound. Nothing like *location* was conceived as their origin. Their source lies in the principle, *Unity*. This is their lost parent. *This* they seek always—immediately—in all directions—wherever it is even partially to be found; thus appeasing, in some measure, the ineradicable tendency, while on the way to its absolute satisfaction in the end. It follows from all this, that any principle which shall be adequate to account for the *law*, or *modus operandi*, of the attractive force in general, will account for this law in particular:—that is

to say, any principle which will show why the atoms should tend to their *general centre of irradiation* with forces inversely proportional to the squares of the distances, will be admitted as satisfactorily accounting, at the same time, for the tendency, according to the same law, of these atoms each to each:—*for the tendency to the centre is merely the tendency each to each, and not any tendency to a centre as such*.—Thus it will be seen, also, that the establishment of my propositions would involve no *necessity* of modification in the terms of the Newtonian definition of Gravity, which declares that each atom attracts each other atom and so forth, and declares this merely; but (always under the supposition that what I propose be, in the end, admitted) it seems clear that some error might occasionally be avoided, in the future processes of Science, were a more ample phraseology adopted:—for instance:—“Each atom tends to every other atom &c. with a force &c.: *the general result being a tendency of all, with a similar force, to a general centre*.”

The reversal of our processes has thus brought us to an identical result; but, while in the one process *intuition* was the starting-point, in the other it was the goal. In commencing the former journey I could only say that, with an irresistible intuition, I *felt* Simplicity to have been the characteristic of the original action of God:—in ending the latter I can only declare that, with an irresistible intuition, I perceive Unity to have been the source of the observed phenomena of the Newtonian gravitation. Thus, according to the schools, I *prove* nothing. So be it:—I design but to suggest—and to *convince* through the suggestion. I am proudly aware that there exist many of the most profound and cautiously discriminative human intellects which cannot *help* being abundantly content with my—suggestions. To these intellects—as to my own—there is no mathematical demonstration which *could* bring the least additional *true proof* of the great *Truth* which I have advanced—the *truth of Original Unity as the source—as the principle of the Universal Phenomena*. For my part, I am not so sure that I speak and see—I am not so sure that my heart beats and that my soul lives:—of the rising of to-morrow’s sun—a probability that as yet lies in the Future—I do not pretend to be one thousandth part as sure—as I am of the irretrievably by-gone *Fact* that All Things and All

Thoughts of Things, with all their ineffable Multiplicity of Relation, sprang at once into being from the primordial and irrelative One. . . .

1848

¶[Proceeding on the mathematical principles of Newton, Laplace, Leibnitz, Alexander von Humboldt, and other

*theoretical cosmologists, Poe endeavors to present a mathematical-physical explanation of the spiritual and physical unity of the universe. For the clearest, most readily available exposition of Poe's method in Eureka and of the relation between his speculative views on the unity of the universe and his literary theories concerning unity, the student is referred to the Craig-Alterton introduction of the American Writers Series edition of Poe, especially pp. xxxv-xlii.]*



## HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW (1807-1882)

Longfellow, during the nineteenth century, was in America what Tennyson was in England, and for much the same reasons. During the twentieth century both have suffered in their fame, chiefly because they seem "Victorian" to a sophisticated, hard-boiled, critical age of realism. Longfellow, especially, is damned for being reticent, sweet, serene, sentimental—"gentle" is the word. He contented himself with a vague form of hopeful moral idealism; modernity prefers a strident social propagandism. His New England reticence caused him to avoid certain themes as either irrelevant or unsuited to poetry; a later age insisted that if the poet is to be worth his salt, he must blink no fact of modern life, however harsh or distressing. The serene faith in goodness that is one of the most persistent notes of Longfellow's smooth verses is as insipid to critics of the latter day as the daring frankness and preoccupation with ugliness of many modern realists and naturalists would have been disgusting to him. Because he remained almost untouched by the pessimism and skepticism that followed in the wake of nineteenth-century scientific theory, preferring to reassert his faith in an abiding humanistic tradition and the Christian hope of human betterment, he has been put down as a shallow moralist and a superficial sentimentalist, lacking in vigor, depth, precision, and worth.

And, indeed, there is too much of seraphic faith, vagueness of thought, triviality of subject matter, sentimentality of feeling, dreaminess of mood, diffusion of idea, and obvious didacticism that no longer seems as essential to human well-being as it once did. But utterly to condemn him for the characteristics of his poetry which his own time found eminently satisfying, not to say edifying, while overlooking the lucid musicality of lyrics like "Hymn to the Night," the splendid pictorial simplicity of "A Dutch Picture," the superb narrative movement of *Hiawatha*, the idyllic repose of *Evangeline*, the vivid characterization of *The Courtship of Miles Standish*, the panoramic sweep of the *Christus* trilogy, the dramatic tension of "The Skeleton in Armor," the authenticity of his numerous sea poems, the high level of his sonnets, the competence of his translations from European

literatures, and the dignified elevation of "Morituri Salutamus"—to ignore all these is to miss the fact that while he failed to equal the grandeur of a Homer or the sublimity of a Milton, he attained a versatility of form, a catholicity of art, an inviolability of taste that Americans could ill afford to have been without. There is no form or genre in which he did not write acceptably—not even the novel and the drama. His linguistic equipment, which included competence in a dozen foreign languages and a reading knowledge of eight others, enabled him to render a distinguished service for his provincial countrymen by translating for them some of the romance and beauty of Europe and European literature. It was through Longfellow, more than any other man, as Bliss Perry reminds us, that "the poetry of the Old World—the romance of town and tower and storied stream, the figures of monk and saint and man-at-arms, of troubadour and minnesinger, of artist and builder and dreamer—became the familiar possession of the New." He became the spirit incarnate of a cosmopolitan point of view in an emerging American art consciousness at a time when a wise selectivity was most desirable. His numerous excellent translations from all the important bodies of European literature, if he had written no original verse of his own, would entitle him to an honored place in the history of American letters and taste. He lacked profundity and originality, having, as Holmes remarked, "a receptive rather than an aggressive temperament"; his mind was acquisitive rather than creative. For his inspirations he read in books and turned toward the past, legendary and historical, instead of looking intently at the present or speculatively into the future. He never enlisted in what Emerson called "the soldiery of dissent." He had a mission, but it was a gentle one. "The natural tendency of poetry," he held, "is to give correct moral impressions, and thereby advance the cause of truth." This cause he sought to advance quietly and tastefully by his "sermons in verse," that avoided the unique, the bizarre, and the eccentric as faithfully as they dwelt on the sane, the normal, and the representative. He was as little the radical and rabble-rouser, on the one hand, as the pure aesthete or poet's poet, on the other. He wrote, not for the few, the

highly cultivated, but for all; and that he did so effectively is amply illustrated by the innumerable reprintings of "People's" and "Fireside" editions which were, and still are, called for. Even today, in Europe as well as in America, his currency remains unparalleled. In England alone twenty-four publishing firms have issued his works. Poems like *Evangeline* have received not one but several translations in German and in French. *Hiawatha* has achieved even a Latin translation. His writings are available in Russian, Hebrew, French, German, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch, Swedish, Norwegian, Danish, Pennsylvania-Dutch, Yiddish, and Icelandic, and portions have appeared in the oriental languages. He remains, whether we like it or not, the representative American poet for the peoples of the world.

Although Longfellow came to be identified with the Cambridge-Boston fraternity of literary men, he was born in Portland, Maine, and did not go to live in Cambridge until he was in his thirtieth year. Like Bryant, he was descended from John Alden and Priscilla Mullens, and it was altogether fitting that he should write *The Courtship of Miles Standish*. Following a good preparatory education, he would doubtless have gone to Harvard, the alma mater of his lawyer father, if the latter had not become a trustee of Bowdoin College when his son came of college age. He passed the entrance examinations at fourteen, but pursued his freshman studies at home for a year, entering Bowdoin in 1822 as a sophomore and graduating in the class of 1825 with Hawthorne.

Two years before going to college he had written a poem on "The Battle of Lovell's Pond," which appeared in the *Portland Gazette*, and he continued to contribute essays and poems to various newspapers and magazines while he was a student at Bowdoin. Early in his senior year he asked for a year of post-graduate study at Harvard, where he proposed to add Italian to his Greek, Latin, and French, while devoting most of his time to "reading history" and "the best authors of polite literature" in preparation for the conduct of a "literary periodical." "I most eagerly aspire after future eminence in literature," he confided to his father; "my whole soul burns most ardently for it, and every earthly thought centers in it. . . . If I can ever rise in the world, it must be by the exercise of my talent in the wide field of literature."

Before this plan could be put in operation, the trustees of Bowdoin, struck by young Longfellow's translation of an ode of Horace and his position as fourth from the top in his graduating class, appointed him to the newly created professorship of modern

languages. This post, carrying a stipend of \$1,000, was too flattering for the lad of eighteen to turn down, especially since it provided an opportunity for him to go to Europe, for the offer was made with the proviso that he spend a year in Europe in further preparation for the position. His father agreed to finance him, and accordingly Longfellow set out in the spring of 1826 for Europe, armed with letters of introduction from George Ticknor and George Bancroft to professors in the German universities under whom they had recently studied. His approach to Europe was the same as Irving's. He was a romantic pilgrim entering hallowed ground; and although he was not to stay seventeen years, as Irving did, he managed to wheedle his father into letting him remain three years. During much of this time, he devoted more attention to sight-seeing and looking for the romantic and picturesque or diverting in France, Spain, Italy, and Germany, to writing at various literary works of a *Sketch-Book* sort, and to cultivating several romantic attachments to interesting young women whom he met in his travels, than to perfecting himself in the languages he was to teach at Bowdoin. But toward the end of his stay, he set resolutely to recoup lost time; and when he returned, in the summer of 1829, he had perfected his French, acquired a good command of Spanish and Italian, and learned enough German to write in fair idiom.

Shortly before his return he was outraged by the proposal of the college authorities to give him, not a professorship at \$1,000 but a "tutorship" at \$600. Disgustedly he wrote to his father that he would have all or nothing. Having traveled extensively in Europe and breathed the enlightened atmosphere of some of the most famous European universities, he had formed a contemptuous opinion of what passed for universities in America—"two or three large brick buildings—with a chapel, and a President to pray in it." If the Bowdoin affair terminated adversely (so he advised his father), he proposed to found a university of his own, the cornerstone of which would be a library, after the German pattern. "As soon as I return," he confided to his father, "I mean to proffer my humble endeavors to the execution of such a plan—and put my shoulder to the wheel. The present is just the moment: we must take the tide there is in the affairs of men."

The controversy over his rank and salary was compromised. He got the professorship at a salary of \$800, with an additional \$100 for serving as college librarian. His duties as librarian involved no manner of hardship, since the library was open only during the noon hour. But the haggling over the terms left a bad taste in his mouth. The young man, just at-

tained to the maturity of twenty-two, but already up to founding a university of his own, found Bowdoin far short of his educational ideal, and the community of Brunswick execrably provincial in comparison with Paris, Rome, and Berlin. His marriage to Mary Storer Potter in 1831 brought him domestic happiness and release from the requirement of residing in the men's dormitory, where he was supposed to serve as proctor—a task that he considered onerous. Meanwhile a full professional career as teacher, editor of textbooks, scholar, poet, reviewer, and essayist kept him busy during his six years at Bowdoin. His chief literary production during this period was a collection of essays published originally in the *New England Magazine* (1831–33) and collected in the *Sketch-Book-like Outre-Mer: A Pilgrimage beyond the Sea* in 1833.

As early as January 4, 1831, he expressed his impatience with “this land of Barbarism—this miserable Down East”; and when, in 1834, he was offered the Smith Professorship of Modern Languages at Harvard to succeed Professor George Ticknor, he grasped the invitation eagerly as offering escape from his exile while affording an opportunity “to tread a stage on which I can take longer strides and spout to a larger audience.”

As in the previous instance, the Harvard invitation carried the suggestion that he spend “a year or 18 months” in Europe at his own expense “for the purpose of a more perfect attainment of the German.” So eager was he to be gone that he disregarded the advice of relatives and friends to delay the journey in deference to his wife's delicate health. Instead of proceeding directly to Germany, they spent the summer and fall traveling to the principal university towns of Norway, Sweden, Denmark, and Holland, in order that he might add what he called “new linguistic feathers to my cap.” While he made good progress in the acquisition of these north-European languages, his wife was brought to the verge of death in October, at Amsterdam, by the premature birth of her child. Two months later, at Rotterdam, she took an unexpected turn for the worse and died. Distraught, he made the last arrangements for sending her body to America, and then pushed on, disconsolately and full of self-accusation, to Heidelberg, where he hoped that immersion in books might occupy his mind to the exclusion of all other thoughts.

Upon arriving at Heidelberg in December, 1835, he enrolled in the university, heard the lectures of the famous Heidelberg historians and philologists, and “buried himself in books,—in old, dusty books,” working his way “diligently through the ancient po-

etic lore of Germany, from Frankish Legends of Saint George, and Saxon-Rhyme-Chronicles, and Nibelungen-Lieds, and Helden-Buchs, and Songs of the Minnesingers and Meistersingers, and Ships of Fools, and Reynard the Foxes, and Death-Dances, and Lamentations of Damned Souls, into the bright sunny land of harvests, where, amid the golden grain and the blue corn-flowers, walk the modern bards, and sing.” While adding markedly to his academic attainments, he set about writing his first course of lectures on the European literatures. Under the stimulation of these studies, which made him thoroughly conversant with the spirit of German romantic song, his pent-up feelings and heartache found perfect reciprocation in the mood of Novalis, the young tragic poet of Germany who wept alone over the grave of his beloved in the twilight and composed “Hymns to the Night,” very much like some of the *Voices of the Night* that were beginning to shape themselves in the mind of the young American poet, who also had loved and lost. The whole German *Sturm-und-Drang* literature accorded with his mood as he came to understand the language of German romantic sentiment and to accept the mystical communion which Novalis, for example, established with the spirit of his beloved in the holy solitude of night. This mood was soon to be supplemented by the sterner moralistic philosophy of Goethe, in whose doctrines of work and renunciation Longfellow sought an escape from the overpowering feelings of grief, purposeless reverie, indulgence in delicious sorrow, and romantic enervation. During the summer he made an extended tour through southern Germany, Switzerland, and Austria, which later furnished the materials for *Hyperion*, a prose romance into which he also wove, in thin disguise, his romantic attachment for Frances Appleton of Boston (ten years younger than himself), whom he met on this tour.

In December of 1836 he established himself in comfortable bachelor's quarters in Craigie House, Cambridge, and prepared for his academic duties, which began in January of the next year. Meanwhile he paid assiduous court to Miss Appleton upon her return to Boston. She had repulsed the arduous young widower's precipitous proposal in Switzerland, and she remained obdurate in Boston—a circumstance that goes far toward explaining the frustration, unrest, indecision, and inner conflict which he felt during his earlier Harvard career, and that accounts for much that is emotionally romantic and sentimentally melancholy in *Hyperion* as well as in his first two collections of poetry, *Voices of the Night* and *Ballads and Other Poems*. In this mood, he foolishly exhibited the pageant of his bleeding heart in the sentimentalized

romance *Hyperion* in 1839, in the hope that it might soften the lady's heart. Announcing its forthcoming appearance to a friend, he wrote: "Next week I shall fire a rocket which I trust will make a commotion in that citadel. Perhaps the garrison will capitulate;—perhaps the rocket may burst and kill me." The rocket landed in the garrison on Beacon Hill without producing a capitulation, without any show of a white flag. Offended at Longfellow's indiscretion in thus publicizing his love for her, Miss Appleton's actions on their next meeting led Longfellow to record in his diary, "It is ended." However, he persevered, and in 1843, after seven years of ardent courtship, he won her. Craigie House, which came to the Longfellow's as a wedding gift from her father, became their happy home, and there they lived together in complete happiness until her tragic death by burning in 1861.

In the meantime Longfellow's "Psalms" and "Ballads" were appearing in the newspapers. Many of them, like the several Psalms of Life, are the direct result of his efforts, under the stimulation of Goethe's philosophy, to gain control over his inward tumult, morbidity, and mournful retrospection by the exercise of renunciation, self-discipline, and a program of active work in the present instead of ineffectual longings for future promises or nostalgic regrets for the past.

Thus it is that Longfellow's first two collections of verse, *Voices of the Night* (1839) and *Ballads and Other Poems* (1841), are less the products of an Olympian calm and self-possession, supposedly natural to Longfellow, than of that peculiar need for self-expression which was inspired at one time by his own mixed feelings of love-sickness and irresolution and at the next by his immersion in the lyric poetry of Germany. Poe, reviewing these early productions, found the first of these notes generally admirable, but objected to what he called the "*recherché* spirit," or bookishness and didacticism—a tendency of mind, as he pointed out, resulting from Longfellow's immersion in the romantic literature of Germany.

Following another trip to Europe during 1842, the publication of *Poems on Slavery*, written during his return voyage, and his marriage in 1843, Longfellow turned more and more to a literary career, although he continued until 1854 to serve with marked distinction at Harvard, introducing his students to the best of the German, French, Spanish, and Italian literatures and, in 1845, publishing his *Poets and Poetry of Europe*, by which many Americans got their first acquaintance with modern European literary art other than English. He was for many years

the most distinguished American interpreter of the European literary spirit in America.

In 1843 he published his closet drama, *The Spanish Student*, followed by *The Waif: A Collection of Poems* (1845), *The Belfry of Bruges and Other Poems* (1845), and *The Estray: A Collection of Poems* (1847). *Evangeline*, representing the first of his longer narrative poems, established him as a national figure in 1847. The story was originally related by H. L. Conolly to Hawthorne and Longfellow with the recommendation of the narrator that Hawthorne make a story of it. As Longfellow recorded Conolly's account of the young Acadian couple it ran as follows:

On their wedding day all the men of the Province were summoned to assemble in the church to hear a proclamation. When assembled, they were seized and shipped off to be distributed through New England,—among them the new bridegroom. The bride set off in search for him—wandered about New England all her lifetime, and at last, when she was old, she found her bridegroom on his death-bed. The shock was so great that it killed her likewise.

Some time later, when it seemed that Hawthorne would not use it for a tale, Longfellow said to him, "If you really do not want this incident for a tale, let me have it for a poem." When *Evangeline* was done, and Hawthorne expressed his great delight in the poem, Longfellow replied, "This success I owe entirely to you, for being willing to forego the pleasure of writing a prose tale which many people would have taken for poetry, that I might write a poem which many people take for prose." This last reference alludes to the hexameter in which the poem is written, and to which there was critical objection in many quarters as unsuited to the English language. Others criticized the author for his dependence upon printed sources for his descriptions of regions which he had never seen, and still others thought he had relied too heavily upon such models as Voss's *Luise* and Goethe's *Hermann und Dorothea*. But it sold 5,000 copies in two months and, despite the objections of the learned and the envious, promptly made its way into the hearts of sentiment-loving Americans.

In 1849 appeared his novel, *Kavanagh*, of interest today chiefly because of the thesis that a great American literature is better developed through a judicious selection of the better motifs and characteristics of European art than by any exclusive attention to purely native themes. "Nationality," says Longfellow, "is a good thing to a certain extent, but universality is better." It is an argument for artistic cosmopolitanism as against nativistic provincialism. *The Seaside and the Fireside*, another volume of poems, ap-

peared in 1850, and the next year he published his re-working of the old medieval story of *Der arme Heinrich* (The Poor Prince Henry), as originally told by Hartmann von der Aue. This he entitled *The Golden Legend*; it became eventually the second part of the trilogy, *The Christus*.

His position at Harvard was no more a sinecure than his professorship at Bowdoin had been. As he progressed in his increasingly successful poetic career, the "dull routine" of academic duties became more and more galling, chiefly because they distracted him from poetic pursuits. At the age of forty-three, reflecting that "Art is long, and time is fleeting," and that "few men have written great poetry after fifty," he decided that he could not go on until he reached fifty, for by that time he would be nothing more than "a fat mill horse, grinding round with blinkers on." Accordingly he resigned his professorship in 1854, to be succeeded by James Russell Lowell.

The first major work following his retirement was *Hiawatha* (1855), on a theme that had attracted him because of its epic qualities. Schoolcraft's books on the Indians supplied the material; the Finnish epic *Kalevala*, the rhymeless trochaic tetrameter measure; and his own narrative facility, the rest. While its action is not as close-knit as we normally expect of an epic, *Hiawatha's* central position as the son of his people, whose fate is bound up in his, lends it not only ethnic but also epic significance. Its theme is the history of a people, from their nomadic stage as hunters and fisher-folk, through primitive stages of agriculture and community life, the attainment of cultural solidarity as manifested by a common religion and a common fund of legend, until finally, becoming an oppressed people, their fortunes decline, their song becomes a memory, and their national heroism departs as *Hiawatha* disappears in the sunset. The poem was fiercely attacked in some quarters, parodied in others, and ridiculed by the critics, while Longfellow maintained his equanimity; and when his publisher protested that something must be done to stop "these atrocious libels," he asked, "By the way, Fields, how is *Hiawatha* selling?" When told that the sale was enormous, and that the presses could not run fast enough to supply the demand, he remarked quietly, "Then I think we had better let these people go on advertising it."

*The Courtship of Miles Standish* was another popular hit on its appearance in 1858. The income from his writings, which had been \$219 in 1840, had risen to \$2,000 by 1850, and thereafter often exceeded \$3,000 annually. As Alexander Pope had been the first in England, so, just about a hundred

years later, Longfellow was the first in America to make poetry a profitable business.

After the tragic death of his wife, Longfellow sought to forget his grief in the absorbing work of translating Dante's *Divine Comedy*, which was published during 1865-69. Meanwhile *Tales of a Wayside Inn*, a notable collection of verse tales obviously owing its inception and plan to Boccaccio's *Decameron*, was begun in 1862 and published in three installments, 1863, 1872, 1873. In 1868 he returned to his ambitious project, conceived as early as 1841: "to undertake a long and elaborate poem by the holy name of Christ, the theme of which would be the various aspects of Christendom in the Apostolic, Middle, and Modern Ages." *The Golden Legend*, published in 1851, formed the central part. In 1868 he published *New England Tragedies*, representing two episodes in the religious history of New England. It forms part III of *The Christus*. Three years later he completed the trilogy with *The Divine Tragedy*, a close metrical version of the gospel history, presenting successive scenes in the life of Christ. Thus *The Christus*, illustrating in its three parts, Faith, Hope, and Charity, came to represent what, in the sonnet "Mezzo Cammin" (written when he reached half man's allotted years of three score and ten), he had set himself as a goal:

to build  
Some tower of song with lofty parapet.

He maintained his high poetic productivity to within two years of his death, publishing between 1873 and 1880 five volumes of verse, including many of his best sonnets, such poems of dignified repose and wisdom as "Morituri Salutamus," and his famous poem of farewell, "The Bells of San Blas," written in 1882, the last year of his life, and ending—

Out of the shadows of night  
The world rolls into light;  
It is daybreak everywhere.

His last years were crowned with flattering honors, at home and abroad. Not the least appreciated of these was the gift from the school children of Cambridge of a chair made from the wood of the spreading chestnut tree of "Village Blacksmith" fame. Shortly after his death a memorial bust of Longfellow was placed in the Poet's Corner of Westminster Abbey, in recognition of his large participation in the general stream of life abroad and of his universal popularity. Longfellow's being the first American to be so honored is indicative of his fame in England. In America he came to hold a place in the

people's mind so revered that, as Professor Odell Shepard remarked, "Criticizing Longfellow is like carrying a rifle into a national forest"; and Bliss Perry added, "One undertakes it with the hesitancy that a man would feel in making a purely aesthetic study of the Stars and Stripes."

That many of Longfellow's poems once highly esteemed are intrinsically meretricious seems obvious to the twentieth-century critic, and the conventional picture of the kindly grandfather, seated before the hearth, surrounded by adoring children, while reading to them in gentle accents is no longer as compelling as it once was. The trite advice of his Psalms of Life and the sentimental consolation to widows and orphans in "The Rainy Day," that "into each life some rain must fall," are aspects of Longfellow

that we can afford to forget, but not his vigorous narrative poetry, his vivid characterization, his sonnets, his remarkable versatility, and, above all, the lucid simplicity of his lyrics. Though he lacked profundity, majesty, and sublimity, he was a master within the realms of homely affection, simple piety, spiritual aspiration, tender feeling, and refinement of thought and manners. But over and above these considerations is the fact that Longfellow, more than any other American poet, has spoken to the hearts of the common people, who have traditionally repeated his lines from childhood onward, until he has become vitally woven into the emotional and intellectual fabric itself of the American folk- and art-consciousness. Thus to become a part of a whole people is no mean achievement.

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### *The Spirit of Poetry*<sup>1</sup>

There is a quiet spirit in these woods,  
 That dwells where'er the gentle south-wind blows;  
 Where, underneath the white-thorn, in the glade,  
 The wild flowers bloom, or, kissing the soft air,

The leaves above their sunny palms outspread.  
 With what a tender and impassioned voice  
 It fills the nice and delicate ear of thought,

<sup>1</sup> Written in 1825, and published first in the *Atlantic Souvenir* for 1828 and subsequently in *Voices of the Night* (1839), these

lines are interesting as expressing a Bryantesque view of nature and of poetry. Compare, for example, Bryant's "Thanatopsis" and "Forest Hymn."

When the fast ushering star of morning comes  
 O'er-riding the gray hills with golden scarf;  
 Or when the cowed and dusky-sandalled Eve, 10  
 In mourning weeds, from out the western gate,  
 Departs with silent pace! That spirit moves  
 In the green valley, where the silver brook,  
 From its full laver,<sup>2</sup> pours the white cascade;  
 And, babbling low amid the tangled woods,  
 Slips down through moss-grown stones with  
 endless laughter.

And frequent, on the everlasting hills,  
 Its feet go forth, when it doth wrap itself  
 In all the dark embroidery of the storm,  
 And shouts the stern, strong wind. And here,  
 amid

The silent majesty of these deep woods,  
 Its presence shall uplift thy thoughts from earth,  
 As to the sunshine and the pure, bright air  
 Their tops the green trees lift. Hence gifted  
 bards

Have ever loved the calm and quiet shades.  
 For them there was an eloquent voice in all  
 The sylvan pomp of woods, the golden sun,  
 The flowers, the leaves, the river on its way,  
 Blue skies, and silver clouds, and gentle winds,  
 The swelling upland, where the sidelong sun 30  
 Aslant the wooden slope, at evening goes,  
 Groves, through whose broken roof the sky  
 looks in,

Mountain, and shattered cliff, and sunny vale,  
 The distant lake, fountains, and mighty trees,  
 In many a lazy syllable, repeating  
 Their old poetic legends to the wind.

And this is the sweet spirit, that doth fill  
 The world; and, in these wayward days of youth,  
 My busy fancy oft embodies it,  
 As a bright image of the light and beauty 40  
 That dwell in nature; of the heavenly forms  
 We worship in our dreams, and the soft hues  
 That stain the wild bird's wing, and flush the  
 clouds

When the sun sets. Within her tender eye  
 The heaven of April, with its changing light,  
 And when it wears the blue of May, is hung,  
 And on her lip the rich, red rose. Her hair  
 Is like the summer tresses of the trees,  
 When twilight makes them brown, and on her  
 cheek

Blushes the richness of an autumn sky, 50  
 With ever-shifting beauty. Then her breath,  
 It is so like the gentle air of Spring,  
 As, from the morning's dewy flowers, it comes  
 Full of their fragrance, that it is a joy  
 To have it round us, and her silver voice  
 Is the rich music of a summer bird, 30  
 Heard in the still night, with its passionate  
 cadence.

1825

1828

### *Prelude*<sup>3</sup>

Pleasant it was, when woods were green  
 And winds were soft and low,  
 To lie amid some sylvan scene,  
 Where, the long drooping boughs between,  
 Shadows dark and sunlight sheen<sup>4</sup>  
 Alternate come and go;

Or where the denser grove receives  
 No sunlight from above,  
 But the dark foliage interweaves  
 In one unbroken roof of leaves,  
 Underneath whose sloping caves  
 The shadows hardly move.

<sup>2</sup> Bowl, basin.

<sup>3</sup> The first poem in Longfellow's first volume of poems, *Voices of the Night* (1839).

<sup>4</sup> Here used in the sense of "shining" or "bright."

Beneath some patriarchal tree  
 I lay upon the ground;  
 His hoary arms uplifted he,  
 And all the broad leaves over me  
 Clapped their little hands in glee,  
 With one continuous sound;—

A slumberous sound, a sound that brings  
 The feelings of a dream, 20  
 As of innumerable wings,  
 As, when a bell no longer swings,  
 Faint the hollow murmur rings  
 O'er meadow, lake, and stream.

And dreams of that which cannot die,  
 Bright visions, came to me,

As lapped in thought I used to lie,  
 And gaze into the summer sky,  
 Where the sailing clouds went by,  
     Like ships upon the sea;

Dreams that the soul of youth engage  
     Ere Fancy has been quelled;  
 Old legends of the monkish page,  
 Traditions of the saint and sage,  
 Tales that have the rime of age,  
     And chronicles of eld.

And, loving still these quaint old themes,  
     Even in the city's throng  
 I feel the freshness of the streams,  
 That, crossed by shades and sunny gleams,  
 Water the green land of dreams,  
     The holy land of song.

Therefore, at Pentecost,<sup>5</sup> which brings  
     The Spring, clothed like a bride,  
 When nestling buds unfold their wings,  
 And bishop's-caps<sup>6</sup> have golden rings,  
 Musing upon many things,  
     I sought the woodlands wide.

The green trees whispered low and mild;  
     It was a sound of joy!  
 They were my playmates when a child,  
 And rocked me in their arms so wild!  
 Still they looked at me and smiled,  
     As if I were a boy;

And ever whispered, mild and low,  
     "Come, be a child once more!"  
 And waved their long arms to and fro,  
 And beckoned solemnly and slow;  
 Oh, I could not choose but go  
     Into the woodlands hoar,—

Into the blithe and breathing air,  
     Into the solemn wood,  
 Solemn and silent everywhere!  
 Nature with folded hands seemed there,  
 Kneeling at her evening prayer!  
     Like one in prayer I stood.

Before me rose an avenue  
     Of tall and sombrous pines;  
 Abroad their fan-like branches grew,  
 And, where the sunshine darted through,

Spread a vapor soft and blue,  
     In long and sloping lines.  
 And, falling on my weary brain,  
 30      Like a fast-falling shower,  
 The dreams of youth came back again,—  
 Low lisping of the summer rain,  
 Dropping on the ripened grain,  
     As once upon the flower.

Visions of childhood! Stay, oh, stay!  
     Ye were so sweet and wild! 80  
 And distant voices seemed to say,  
 "It cannot be! They pass away!  
 Other themes demand thy lay;  
 40      Thou art no more a child!

"The land of Song within thee lies,  
     Watered by living springs;  
 The lids of Fancy's sleepless eyes  
 Are gates unto that Paradise;  
 Holy thoughts, like stars, arise;  
     Its clouds are angels' wings. 90

"Learn, that henceforth thy song shall be,  
     Not mountains capped with snow,  
 Nor forests sounding like the sea,  
 50      Nor rivers flowing ceaselessly,  
 Where the woodlands bend to see  
     The bending heavens below.

"There is a forest where the din  
     Of iron branches sounds!  
 A mighty river roars between,  
 And whosoever looks therein 100  
 Sees the heavens all black with sin,  
     Sees not its depth, nor bounds.

"Athwart the swinging branches cast,  
 60      Soft rays of sunshine pour;  
 Then comes the fearful wintry blast;  
 Our hopes, like withered leaves, fall fast;  
 Pallid lips say, 'It is past!  
     We can return no more!'

"Look, then, into thine heart, and writel<sup>7</sup>  
     Yes, into Life's deep stream! 110  
 All forms of sorrow and delight,  
 All solemn Voices of the Night,  
 That can soothe thee, or affright,—  
     Be these henceforth thy theme."

70 1839

<sup>5</sup> The seventh Sunday after Easter.

<sup>6</sup> Also called miterwort.

<sup>7</sup> This line is almost quoted verbatim from Sidney's sonnet sequence, *Astrophel and Stella*, i, 14.



*Hymn to the Night*Ἄσπασιη, τριλλιστος<sup>8</sup>

I heard the trailing garments of the Night  
Sweep through her marble halls!  
I saw her sable skirts all fringed with light  
From the celestial walls!

I felt her presence, by its spell of might,  
Stoop o'er me from above;  
The calm, majestic presence of the Night,  
As of the one I love.

I heard the sounds of sorrow and delight,  
The manifold, soft chimes,  
That fill the haunted chambers of the Night,  
Like some old poet's rhymes.

From the cool cisterns of the midnight air  
My spirit drank repose;  
The fountain of perpetual peace flows there,—  
From those deep cisterns flows.

O holy Night! from thee I learn to bear  
What man has borne before!  
Thou layest thy finger on the lips of Care,  
And they complain no more.

Peace! Peace! Orestes-like<sup>9</sup> I breathe this prayer!  
Descend with broad-winged flight,  
The welcome, the thrice-prayed for, the most fair,  
The best-beloved Night!

1839 1839

*A Psalm of Life*<sup>10</sup>

WHAT THE HEART OF THE YOUNG MAN SAID  
TO THE PSALMIST

Tell me not, in mournful numbers,  
Life is but an empty dream!—

<sup>8</sup> Welcome, thrice prayed for.<sup>9</sup> Orestes (in Æschylus' tragedy, *The Choephora*), after murdering his mother to avenge his father's death, is pursued by the Furies. This expiation and final peace are the subject of *The Eumenides*.<sup>10</sup> This best-known of Longfellow's "Psalms" grew partly out of his inner experience, partly out of his reading in romantic German literature, notably the lyrics of Goethe and Novalis. "I kept it some time in manuscript," said Longfellow, "unwilling to show it to any one, it being a voice from my inmost heart at a time when I was rallying from depression." He first made the poem public by reading it to his Harvard class at the end of an hour's lecture on Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister*. Obviously it derives largely from Goethe's doctrines of renunciation and work. The poem was first printed in *Knickerbocker Magazine*, September, 1838, and collected in *Voices of the Night* (1839).

For the soul is dead that slumbers,  
And things are not what they seem.

Life is real! Life is earnest!  
And the grave is not its goal;  
Dust thou art, to dust returnest,  
Was not spoken of the soul.

Not enjoyment, and not sorrow,  
Is our destined end or way;  
But to act, that each to-morrow  
Find us farther than to-day.

Art is long, and Time is fleeting,  
And our hearts, though stout and brave,  
Still, like muffled drums, are beating  
Funeral marches to the grave.

In the world's broad field of battle,  
In the bivouac of Life,  
Be not like dumb, driven cattle!  
Be a hero in the strife!

Trust no Future, howe'er pleasant!  
Let the dead Past bury its dead!  
Act,—act in the living Present!  
Heart within, and God o'erhead!

Lives of great men all remind us  
We can make our lives sublime,  
And, departing, leave behind us  
Footprints on the sands of time;—

Footprints, that perhaps another,  
Sailing o'er life's solemn main,  
A forlorn and shipwrecked brother,  
Seeing, shall take heart again.

Let us, then, be up and doing,  
With a heart for any fate;  
Still achieving, still pursuing,  
Learn to labor and to wait.

1838 1839

*Footsteps of Angels*<sup>11</sup>

When the hours of Day are numbered,  
And the voices of the Night

<sup>11</sup> This poem commemorates the death in 1835 of Longfellow's brother-in-law, George W. Pierce, and of his first wife in the same year. First published in the *Knickerbocker Magazine*, September, 1838, and included in *Voices of the Night*, 1839.

Wake the better soul, that slumbered,  
To holy, calm delight;

Ere the evening lamps are lighted,  
And, like phantoms grim and tall,  
Shadows from the fitful firelight  
Dance upon the parlor wall;

Then the forms of the departed  
Enter at the open door;  
The beloved, the true-hearted,  
Come to visit me once more;

He, the young and strong, who cherished  
Noble longings for the strife,  
By the roadside fell and perished,  
Weary with the march of life!

They, the holy ones and weakly,  
Who the cross of suffering bore,  
Folded their pale hands so meekly,  
Spake with us on earth no more!

And with them the Being Beautous,<sup>12</sup>  
Who unto my youth was given,  
More than all things else to love me,  
And is now a saint in heaven.

With a slow and noiseless footstep  
Comes that messenger divine,  
Takes the vacant chair beside me,  
Lays her gentle hand in mine.

And she sits and gazes at me  
With those deep and tender eyes,  
Like the stars, so still and saint-like,  
Looking downward from the skies.

Uttered not, yet comprehended,  
Is the spirit's voiceless prayer,  
Soft rebukes, in blessings ended,  
Breathing from her lips of air.

Oh, though oft depressed and lonely,  
All my fears are laid aside,  
If I but remember only  
Such as these have lived and died!

1838

### *The Reaper and the Flowers*

There is a Reaper, whose name is Death,  
And, with his sickle keen,

<sup>12</sup> A reference to his wife, Mary Potter Longfellow.

He reaps the bearded grain at a breath,  
And the flowers that grow between.

"Shall I have naught that is fair?" saith he;  
"Have naught but the bearded grain?  
Though the breath of these flowers is sweet to me,  
I will give them all back again."

He gazed at the flowers with tearful eyes,  
10 He kissed their drooping leaves; 10  
It was for the Lord of Paradisc  
He bound them in his sheaves.

"My Lord has need of these flowerets gay,"  
The Reaper said, and smiled;  
"Dear tokens of the earth are they,  
Where He was once a child.

"They shall all bloom in fields of light,  
Transplanted by my care,  
And saints, upon their garments white,  
20 These sacred blossoms wear." 20

And the mother gave, in tears and pain,  
The flowers she most did love;  
She knew she should find them all again  
In the fields of light above.

Oh, not in cruelty, not in wrath,  
The Reaper came that day;  
'T was an angel visited the green earth,  
And took the flowers away.

1839

### *The Beleaguered City*<sup>13</sup>

I have read, in some old, marvellous tale,  
Some legend strange and vague,  
That a midnight host of spectres pale  
Beleaguered the walls of Prague.

Beside the Moldau's rushing stream,  
With the wan moon overhead,  
There stood, as in an awful dream,  
40 The army of the dead.

White as a sea-fog, landward bound,  
The spectral camp was seen, 10

<sup>13</sup> "The Beleaguered City" was suggested by the following note in Sir Walter Scott's *Border Minstrelsy*: "Similar to this was the *Nacht Lager*, or Midnight Camp, which seemed nightly to beleaguer the walls of Prague, but which disappeared at the recitation of certain magical words." First published in the *Southern Literary Messenger*, November, 1839, it was included in *Voices of the Night* (1839).

And, with a sorrowful, deep sound,  
The river flowed between.

No other voice nor sound was there,  
No drum, nor sentry's pace;  
The mist-like banners clasped the air  
As clouds with clouds embrace.

But when the old cathedral bell  
Proclaimed the morning prayer,  
The white pavilions rose and fell  
On the alarmèd air.

Down the broad valley fast and far  
The troubled army fled;  
Up rose the glorious morning star,  
The ghastly host was dead.

I have read, in the marvellous heart of man,  
That strange and mystic scroll,  
That an army of phantoms vast and wan  
Beleaguer the human soul.

Encamped beside Life's rushing stream,  
In Fancy's misty light,

Gigantic shapes and shadows gleam  
Portentous through the night.

Upon its midnight battle-ground  
The spectral camp is seen,  
And, with a sorrowful, deep sound,  
Flows the River of Life between.

No other voice nor sound is there,  
In the army of the grave;  
No other challenge breaks the air,  
But the rushing of Life's wave.

And when the solemn and deep church-bell  
Entreats the soul to pray,  
The midnight phantoms feel the spell,  
The shadows sweep away.

Down the broad Vale of Tears afar  
The spectral camp is fled;  
Faith shineth as a morning star,  
Our ghastly fears are dead.

1839

1839

30

### *The Skeleton in Armor*<sup>14</sup>

"Speak! speak! thou fearful guest!  
Who, with thy hollow breast  
Still in rude armor drest,  
Comest to daunt me!  
Wrapt not in Eastern balms,  
But with thy fleshless palms  
Stretched, as if asking alms,  
Why dost thou haunt me?"

Then, from those cavernous eyes  
Pale flashes seemed to rise,  
As when the Northern skies  
Gleam in December;  
And, like the water's flow  
Under December's snow,  
Came a dull voice of woe  
From the heart's chamber.

"I was a Viking old!  
My deeds, though manifold,  
No Skald in song has told,  
No Saga taught thee!  
Take heed, that in thy verse  
Thou dost the tale rehearse,  
Else dread a dead man's curse;  
For this I sought thee.

"Far in the Northern Land,  
By the wild Baltic's strand,  
I, with my childish hand,  
Tamed the gerfalcon;  
And, with my skates fast-bound,  
Skimmed the half-frozen Sound,  
That the poor whimpering hound  
Trembled to walk on.

"Oft to his frozen lair  
Tracked I the grisly bear,  
While from my path the hare  
Fled like a shadow;  
Oft through the forest dark

<sup>14</sup> Concerning the origin of this poem Longfellow said, "A skeleton had been dug up at Fall River clad in broken and corroded armor; and the idea occurred to me of connecting it with the Round Tower at Newport." Both of these objects were then considered to be of Norse origin. Written in 1840, the poem was first published in the *Knickerbocker Magazine*, January, 1841, and included in *Ballads and Other Poems* (1841).

Followed the were-wolf's bark,  
Until the soaring lark  
Sang from the meadow.

"But when I older grew,  
Joining a corsair's crew,  
O'er the dark sea I flew  
With the marauders.  
Wild was the life we led;  
Many the souls that sped,  
Many the hearts that bled,  
By our stern orders.

"Many a wassail-bout  
Wore the long Winter out;  
Often our midnight shout  
Set the cocks crowing,  
As we the Berserk's tale  
Measured in cups of ale,  
Draining the oaken pail,  
Filled to o'erflowing.

"Once as I told in glee  
Tales of the stormy sea,  
Soft eyes did gaze on me,  
Burning yet tender;  
And as the white stars shine  
On the dark Norway pine,  
On that dark heart of mine  
Fell their soft splendor.

"I wooed the blue-eyed maid,  
Yielding, yet half afraid,  
And in the forest's shade  
Our vows were plighted.  
Under its loosened vest  
Fluttered her little breast,  
Like birds within their nest  
By the hawk frightened.

"Bright in her father's hall  
Shields gleamed upon the wall,  
Loud sang the minstrels all,  
Chanting his glory;  
When of old Hildebrand  
I asked his daughter's hand,  
Mute did the minstrels stand  
To hear my story.

"While the brown ale he quaffed,  
Loud then the champion laughed,

And as the wind-gusts waft  
The sea-foam brightly,  
40 So the loud laugh of scorn,  
Out of those lips unshorn,  
From the deep drinking-horn  
Blew the foam lightly.

"She was a Prince's child,  
I but a Viking wild,  
90 And though she blushed and smiled,  
I was discarded!  
Should not the dove so white  
Follow the sea-mew's flight,  
50 Why did they leave that night  
Her nest unguarded?

"Scarce had I put to sea,  
Bearing the maid with me,—  
Fairest of all was she  
Among the Norsemen!—  
100 When on the white sea-strand,  
Waving his armed hand,  
Saw we old Hildebrand,  
With twenty horsemen.

60 "Then launched they to the blast,  
Bent like a reed each mast,  
Yet we were gaining fast,  
When the wind failed us;  
And with a sudden flaw  
Came round the gusty Skaw,<sup>15</sup>  
110 So that our foe we saw  
Laugh as he hailed us.

"And as to catch the gale  
Round veered the flapping sail,  
70 'Death!' was the helmsman's hail,  
'Death without quarter!'  
Mid-ships with iron keel  
Struck we her ribs of steel;  
Down her black hulk did reel  
120 Through the black water!

"As with his wings aslant,  
Sails the fierce cormorant,  
Seeking some rocky haunt,  
With his prey laden,—  
80 So toward the open main,  
Beating to sea again,

<sup>15</sup> Cape Skagen, the northern point of Jutland in Denmark,

Through the wild hurricane,  
Bore I the maiden.

"Three weeks we westward bore,  
And when the storm was o'er,  
Cloud-like we saw the shore  
Stretching to leeward;  
There for my lady's bower  
Built I the lofty tower,  
Which, to this very hour,  
Stands looking seaward.

"There lived we many years;  
Time dried the maiden's tears;  
She had forgot her fears,  
She was a mother;  
Death closed her mild blue eyes,  
Under that tower she lies;  
Ne'er shall the sun arise  
On such another!

"Still grew my bosom then,

Still as a stagnant fen!  
Hateful to me were men,  
The sunlight hateful!  
In the vast forest here,  
Clad in my warlike gear,  
Fell I upon my spear,  
Oh, death was grateful!

"Thus, seamed with many scars,  
Bursting these prison bars,  
Up to its native stars  
My soul ascended!  
There from the flowing bowl  
Deep drinks the warrior's soul,  
*Skool! \* to the Northland! skool!"*  
Thus the tale ended.

\* In Scandinavia, this is the customary salutation when drinking a health. I have slightly changed the orthography of the word, in order to preserve the correct pronunciation [*skaal*].

### *The Wreck of the Hesperus*<sup>16</sup>

It was the schooner Hesperus,  
That sailed the wintry sea;  
And the skipper had taken his little daughter,  
To bear him company.

Blue were her eyes as the fairy-flax,  
Her cheeks like the dawn of day,  
And her bosom white as the hawthorn buds,  
That ope in the month of May.

The skipper he stood beside the helm,  
His pipe was in his mouth,

And he watched how the veering flaw did blow  
The smoke now West, now South.

Then up and spake an old Sailor,  
Had sailed to the Spanish Main,  
"I pray thee, put into yonder port,  
For I fear a hurricane.

"Last night, the moon had a golden ring,  
And to-night no moon we see!"  
The skipper, he blew a whiff from his pipe,  
And a scornful laugh laughed he.

Colder and louder blew the wind,  
A gale from the Northcast,  
The snow fell hissing in the brine,  
And the billows frothed like yeast.

Down came the storm, and smote amain  
The vessel in its strength;  
She shuddered and paused, like a frightened steed,  
Then leaped her cable's length.

"Come hither; come hither! my little daughter,  
And do not tremble so;  
For I can weather the roughest gale  
That ever wind did blow."

<sup>16</sup> "News of shipwrecks horrible on the coast," wrote Longfellow in his journal on December 17, 1839. "Twenty bodies washed ashore near Gloucester, one lashed to a piece of wreck. There is a reef called Norman's Woe where many of these took place; among others the schooner Hesperus. Also the Seal-flower on Black Rock. I must write a ballad on this." Thirteen days later he recorded, "I sat till twelve o'clock by my fire, smoking, when suddenly it came into my head to write *The Ballad of the Schooner Hesperus*; which I accordingly did. Then I went to bed, but could not sleep. New thoughts were running in my mind, and I got up to add them to the ballad. It was three by the clock. I then went to bed and fell asleep. I feel pleased with the ballad. It hardly cost me an effort. It did not come into my mind in lines, but by stanzas."

In the tradition of such old English ballads as "Sir Patrick Spens," Longfellow's poem shows the same rapidity of movement and strength of metaphor, but it also obviously derives from the art form of the ballad typified by Goethe's "The Erlking."

He wrapped her warm in his scaman's coat  
 Against the stinging blast;  
 He cut a rope from a broken spar,  
 And bound her to the mast.  
 "O father! I hear the church-bells ring,  
 Oh say, what may it be?"  
 "'T is a fog-bell on a rock-bound coast!"—  
 And he steered for the open sea. 40  
 "O father! I hear the sound of guns,  
 Oh say, what may it be?"  
 "Some ship in distress, that cannot live  
 In such an angry sea!"  
 "O father! I see a gleaming light,  
 Oh say, what may it be?"  
 But the father answered never a word,  
 A frozen corpse was he.  
 Lashed to the helm, all stiff and stark,  
 With his face turned to the skies, 50  
 The lantern glamed through the gleaming snow  
 On his fixed and glassy eyes.  
 Then the maiden clasped her hands and prayed  
 That saved she might be;  
 And she thought of Christ, who stilled the wave,  
 On the Lake of Galilee.  
 And fast through the midnight dark and drear,  
 Through the whistling sleet and snow,  
 Like a sheeted ghost, the vessel swept  
 Tow'rd the reef of Norman's Woe. 60  
 And ever the fitful gusts between  
 A sound came from the land;  
 It was the sound of the trampling surf  
 On the rocks and the hard sea-sand.  
 The breakers were right beneath her bows,  
 She drifted a dreary wreck,  
 And a whooping billow swept the crew  
 Like icicles from her deck.  
 She struck where the white and fleecy waves  
 Looked soft as carded wool, 70  
 But the cruel rocks, they gored her side  
 Like the horns of an angry bull.  
 Her rattling shrouds, all sheathed in ice,  
 With the masts went by the board;  
 Like a vessel of glass, she stove and sank,  
 Ho! ho! the breakers roared!  
 At daybreak, on the bleak sea-beach,  
 A fisherman stood aghast,  
 To see the form of a maiden fair,  
 Lashed close to a drifting mast. 80  
 The salt sea was frozen on her breast,  
 The salt tears in her eyes;  
 And he saw her hair, like the brown seaweed,  
 On the billows fall and rise.  
 Such was the wreck of the Hesperus,  
 In the midnight and the snow!  
 Christ save us all from death like this,  
 On the reef of Norman's Woe!  
 1839 1840

### *The Village Blacksmith* <sup>17</sup>

Under a spreading chestnut-tree  
 The village smithy stands;  
 The smith, a mighty man is he,  
 With large and sinewy hands;  
 And the muscles of his brawny arms  
 Are strong as iron bands.

His hair is crisp, and black, and long,  
 His face is like the tan;  
 His brow is wet with honest sweat,  
 He earns whate'er he can,  
 And looks the whole world in the face,  
 For he owes not any man. 10  
 Weck in, weck out, from morn till night,  
 You can hear his bellows blow;

<sup>17</sup> In the autumn of 1839, while Longfellow was writing "Psalms," he noted in his diary, on October 5, "Wrote a new Psalm of Life. It is *The Village Blacksmith*." A year later he was thinking of ballads, and wrote to his father, October 25: "My pen has not been prolific of late; only a little poetry has trickled from it. There will be a kind of ballad on a Blacksmith in the next Knickerbocker [November 1840], which you may consider,

if you please, as a song in praise of your ancestor at Newbury [the first Stephen Longfellow]." The suggestion for the poem came from a smithy which Longfellow passed daily. The horse-chestnut that shaded it was cut down in 1876, against Longfellow's protest. On his seventy-second birthday the school children presented Longfellow with an arm-chair made of the wood of the old tree. The smithy still stands in Cambridge.

You can hear him swing his heavy sledge,  
 With measured beat and slow,  
 Like a sexton ringing the village bell,  
 When the evening sun is low.

And children coming home from school  
 Look in at the open door;  
 They love to see the flaming forge,  
 And hear the bellows roar,  
 And catch the burning sparks that fly  
 Like chaff from a threshing-floor.

He goes on Sunday to the church,  
 And sits among his boys;  
 He hears the parson pray and preach,  
 He hears his daughter's voice,  
 Singing in the village choir,  
 And it makes his heart rejoice.

It sounds to him like her mother's voice,  
 Singing in Paradise!  
 He needs must think of her once more,  
 How in the grave she lies;  
 And with his hard, rough hand he wipes  
 A tear out of his eyes.

Toiling,—rejoicing,—sorrowing,  
 Onward through life he goes;  
 Each morning sees some task begun,  
 Each evening sees it close;  
 Something attempted, something done,  
 Has earned a night's repose.

Thanks, thanks to thee, my worthy friend,  
 For the lesson thou hast taught!  
 Thus at the flaming forge of life  
 Our fortunes must be wrought;  
 Thus on its sounding anvil shaped  
 Each burning deed and thought.

1840

### *The Rainy Day*

The day is cold, and dark, and dreary;  
 It rains, and the wind is never weary;  
 The vine still clings to the mouldering wall,  
 But at every gust the dead leaves fall,  
 And the day is dark and dreary.

My life is cold, and dark, and dreary;  
 It rains, and the wind is never weary;

My thoughts still cling to the mouldering Past,  
 But the hopes of youth fall thick in the blast,  
 And the days are dark and dreary. 10

Be still, sad heart! and cease repining;  
 Behind the clouds is the sun still shining;  
 20 Thy fate is the common fate of all,  
 Into each life some rain must fall,  
 Some days must be dark and dreary.

1841

### *Excelsior* <sup>18</sup>

The shades of night were falling fast,  
 As through an Alpine village passed  
 A youth, who bore, 'mid snow and ice,  
 30 A banner with the strange device,  
 Excelsior!

His brow was sad; his eye beneath,  
 Flashed like a falchion from its sheath,  
 And like a silver clarion rung  
 The accents of that unknown tongue,  
 Excelsior! 10

In happy homes he saw the light  
 Of household fires gleam warm and bright;  
 Above, the spectral glaciers shone,

40

<sup>18</sup> The original draft of this poem, dated September 28, 1841, now preserved in the library of Harvard University, was written on a letter-envelope from Charles Sumner. The suggestion for the poem came to Longfellow from a scrap of newspaper, a part of the heading of a New York newspaper, bearing the seal of the state—a shield, with a rising sun, and the motto *Excelsior*. Longfellow himself wrote, concerning the intention of the poem, to C. K. Tuckermann:

"I have had the pleasure of receiving your note in regard to the poem *Excelsior* and very willingly give you my intention in writing it. This was no more than to display, in a series of pictures, the life of a man of genius, resisting all temptations, laying aside all fears, heedless of all warnings, and pressing right on to accomplish his purpose. His motto *Excelsior*—'higher.' He passes through the Alpine village—through the rough, cold paths of the world—where the peasants cannot understand him, and where his watchword is in an 'unknown tongue.' He disregards the happiness of domestic peace and sees the glaciers—his fate—before him. He disregards the warning of the old man's wisdom and the fascination of woman's love. He answers to all, 'Higher yet!' The monks of St. Bernard are the representatives of religious forms and ceremonies, and with their oft-repeated prayer mingles the sound of his voice, telling them there is something higher than forms and ceremonies. Filled with these aspirations, he perishes; without having reached the perfection he longed for; and the voice heard in the air is the promise of immortality and progress ever upward. You will perceive that *Excelsior*, an adjective of the comparative degree, is used adverbially; a use justified by the best Latin writers." This Longfellow afterwards found to be a mistake, and explained *excelsior* as the last word of the phrase *Scopus meus est excelsior*.

And from his lips escaped a groan,  
Excelsior!

"Try not the Pass!" the old man said;  
"Dark lowers the tempest overhead,  
The roaring torrent is deep and wide!"  
And loud that clarion voice replied,  
Excelsior!

"O stay," the maiden said, "and rest  
Thy weary head upon this breast!"  
A tear stood in his bright blue eye,  
But still he answered, with a sigh,  
Excelsior!

"Beware the pine-tree's withered branch!  
Beware the awful avalanche!"  
This was the peasant's last Good-night,  
A voice replied, far up the height,  
Excelsior!

At break of day, as heavenward  
The pious monks of Saint Bernard  
Uttered the oft-repeated prayer,  
A voice cried through the startled air,  
Excelsior!

A traveller, by the faithful hound,  
Half-buried in the snow was found,  
Still grasping in his hand of ice  
That banner with the strange device,  
Excelsior!

There in the twilight cold and gray,  
Lifeless, but beautiful, he lay,  
And from the sky, serene and far,  
A voice fell, like a falling star,  
Excelsior!

1841

### *The Slave's Dream*<sup>19</sup>

Beside the ungathered rice he lay,  
His sickle in his hand:  
His breast was bare, his matted hair  
Was buried in the sand.  
Again, in the mist and shadow of sleep,  
He saw his Native Land.

Wide through the landscape of his dreams  
The lordly Niger flowed;

<sup>19</sup> One of a small collection of poems entitled *Poems on Slavery* (1842), written in the summer of 1842 during a return voyage from Europe, whither Longfellow had gone earlier in the year to try the baths at Marienberg on the Rhine.

Beneath the palm-trees on the plain  
Once more a king he strode;  
And heard the tinkling caravans  
Descend the mountain road.

10

He saw once more his dark-eyed queen  
Among her children stand;  
20 They clasped his neck, they kissed his cheeks,  
They held him by the hand!—  
A tear burst from the sleeper's lids  
And fell into the sand.

And then at furious speed he rode  
Along the Niger's bank;  
His bridle-reins were golden chains,  
And, with a martial clank,  
At each leap he could feel his scabbard of steel  
Smiting his stallion's flank.

20

30 Before him, like a blood-red flag,  
The bright flamingoes flew;  
From morn till night he followed their flight,  
O'er plains where the tamarind grew,  
Till he saw the roofs of Caffre huts,  
And the ocean rose to view.

30

At night he heard the lion roar,  
And the hycna scream,  
And the river-horse, as he crushed the reeds  
Beside some hidden stream;  
40 And it passed, like a glorious roll of drums,  
Through the triumph of his dream.

The forests, with their myriad tongues,  
Shouted of liberty;  
And the Blast of the Desert cried aloud,  
With a voice so wild and free,  
That he started in his sleep and smiled  
At their tempestuous glee.

40

He did not feel the driver's whip,  
Nor the burning heat of day;  
For Death had illumined the Land of Sleep,  
And his lifeless body lay  
A worn-out fetter, that the soul  
Had broken and thrown away!

1842

### *The Warning*<sup>20</sup>

Beware! The Israelite of old, who tore  
The lion in his path,—when, poor and blind,

<sup>20</sup> The last of the *Poems on Slavery*.



He saw the blessed light of heaven no more,  
 Shorn of his noble strength and forced to grind  
 In prison, and at last led forth to be  
 A pander to Philistine revelry,—

Upon the pillars of the temple laid  
 His desperate hands, and in its overthrow  
 Destroyed himself, and with him those who made  
 A cruel mockery of his sightless woe; 10  
 The poor, blind Slave, the scoff and jest of all,  
 Expired, and thousands perished in the fall!

There is a poor, blind Samson in this land,  
 Shorn of his strength and bound in bonds of  
 steel,  
 Who may, in some grim revel, raise his hand,  
 And shake the pillars of this Commonweal,  
 Till the vast Temple of our liberties  
 A shapeless mass of wreck and rubbish lies.

1842

### *Mezzo Cammin*<sup>21</sup>

Half of my life is gone, and I have let  
 The years slip from me and have not fulfilled  
 The aspiration of my youth, to build  
 Some tower of song with lofty parapet.  
 Not indolence, nor pleasure, nor the fret  
 Of restless passions that would not be stilled,  
 But sorrow, and a care that almost killed,  
 Kept me from what I may accomplish yet;  
 Though, half-way up the hill, I see the Past  
 Lying beneath me with its sounds and sights,— 10  
 A city in the twilight dim and vast,  
 With smoking roofs, soft bells, and gleaming  
 lights,—  
 And hear above me on the autumnal blast  
 The cataract of Death far thundering from  
 the heights.

### *The Belfry of Bruges*<sup>22</sup>

In the market-place of Bruges stands the belfry  
 old and brown;

<sup>21</sup> Written at Boppard on the Rhine, August 25, 1842, just before leaving for home.

<sup>22</sup> An expression of Longfellow's delight in the chimes of Bruges, described in his diary for May 30 and 31, 1842, while he lodged at the Fleur-de-Blé. The poem was first published in *Graham's Magazine*, January, 1843; it formed the title-piece of the volume, *The Belfry of Bruges and Other Poems*, 1845.

Thrice consumed and thrice rebuilt, still it  
 watches o'er the town.

As the summer morn was breaking, on that lofty  
 tower I stood,  
 And the world threw off the darkness, like the  
 weeds of widowhood.

Thick with towns and hamlets studded, and with  
 streams and vapors gray,  
 Like a shield embossed with silver, round and  
 vast the landscape lay.

At my feet the city slumbered. From its chimneys,  
 here and there,  
 Wreaths of snow-white smoke, ascending, van-  
 ished, ghost-like, into air.

Not a sound rose from the city at that early  
 morning hour,  
 But I heard a heart of iron beating in the ancient  
 tower. 10

From their nests beneath the rafters sang the  
 swallows wild and high;  
 And the world, beneath me sleeping, seemed more  
 distant than the sky.

Then most musical and solemn, bringing back  
 the olden times,  
 With their strange, unearthly changes rang the  
 melancholy chimes,

Like the psalms from some old cloister, when the  
 nuns sing in the choir;  
 And the great bell tolled among them, like the  
 chanting of a friar.

Visions of the days departed, shadowy phantoms  
 filled my brain;  
 They who live in history only seemed to walk  
 the earth again;

All the Foresters<sup>23</sup> of Flanders,—mighty Baldwin  
 Bras de Fer,  
 Lyderick du Bucq and Cressy, Philip, Guy de  
 Dampierre. 10

I beheld the pageants splendid that adorned those  
 days of old;  
 Stately dames, like queens attended, knights who  
 bore the Fleece of Gold;<sup>24</sup>

<sup>23</sup> The title of the early Flemish governors, the names of several of which follow.

<sup>24</sup> An order founded by Philippe de Bourgogne in 1430.

Lombard and Venetian merchants with deep-  
laden argosies;  
Ministers from twenty nations; more than royal  
pomp and ease.

I beheld proud Maximilian,<sup>25</sup> kneeling humbly  
on the ground;  
I beheld the gentle Mary, hunting with her hawk  
and hound;

And her lighted bridal-chamber, where a duke  
slept with the queen,  
And the armed guard around them, and the sword  
unsheathed between.

I beheld the Flemish weavers, with Namur and  
Juliers bold,  
Marching homeward from the bloody battle of  
the Spurs of Gold;<sup>26</sup>

Saw the fight at Minnewater,<sup>27</sup> saw the White  
Hoods moving west,  
Saw great Artevelde victorious scale the Golden  
Dragon's nest.

And again the whiskered Spaniard all the land  
with terror smote;  
And again the wild alarum sounded from the  
tocsin's throat;

Till the bell of Ghent responded o'er lagoon and  
dike of sand,  
"I am Roland! I am Roland! there is victory in  
the land!"

Then the sound of drums aroused me. The  
awakened city's roar  
Chased the phantoms I had summoned back into  
their graves once more.

Hours had passed away like minutes; and, before  
I was aware,  
Lo! the shadow of the belfry crossed the sun-  
illuminated square.

1842

1845

<sup>25</sup> Son of Frederick III, imprisoned by the people of Bruges, and released only on condition that he swear, while kneeling in the public square, not to take vengeance.

<sup>26</sup> A notable victory for the Flemish over the French, fought in 1302.

<sup>27</sup> A fight between the people of Bruges and those of Ghent.

### *The Arsenal at Springfield*<sup>28</sup>

This is the Arsenal. From floor to ceiling,  
Like a huge organ, rise the burnished arms;  
But from their silent pipes no anthem pealing  
Startles the villages with strange alarms.

Ah! what a sound will rise, how wild and dreary,  
When the death-angel touches those swift keys!  
What loud lament and dismal Miserere  
Will mingle with their awful symphonies!

I hear even now the infinite fierce chorus,  
The cries of agony, the endless groan,<sup>10</sup>  
Which, through the ages that have gone before us,  
In long reverberations reach our own.

On helm and harness rings the Saxon hammer,  
Through Cimbric forest roars the Norseman's  
song,

And loud, amid the universal clamor,  
O'er distant deserts sounds the Tartar gong.

I hear the Florentine, who from his palace  
Wheels out his battle-bell with dreadful din,  
And Aztec priests upon their teocallis<sup>29</sup>  
Beat the wild war-drums made of serpent's  
skin;

20

The tumult of each sacked and burning village;  
The shout that every prayer for mercy drowns;  
The soldiers' revels in the midst of pillage;  
The wail of famine in beleaguered towns;

The bursting shell, the gateway wrenched asunder,  
The rattling musketry, the clashing blade;  
And ever and anon, in tones of thunder,  
The diapason of the cannonade.

Is it, O man, with such discordant noises,  
With such accursed instruments as these,<sup>30</sup>  
Thou drownest Nature's sweet and kindly voices,  
And jarrest the celestial harmonies?

<sup>28</sup> On their wedding journey in the summer of 1843, the Longfellowes passed through Springfield, Mass., and visited the United States arsenal there, in the company of Charles Sumner. Samuel Longfellow observed, "While Mr. Sumner was endeavoring to impress upon the attendant that the money expended upon these weapons of war would have been much better spent on a library, Mrs. Longfellow pleased her husband by remarking how like an organ looked the ranged and shining gun-barrels which covered the walls from floor to ceiling, and suggesting what mournful music Death would bring from them. 'We grew quite warlike against war,' she wrote, 'and I urged H[enry]. to write a peace poem.'" The poem was written a few months later.

<sup>29</sup> Mexican temples.

Were half the power that fills the world with terror,  
 Were half the wealth bestowed on camps and  
 courts,  
 Given to redeem the human mind from error,  
 There were no need of arsenals or forts:

The warrior's name would be a name abhorred!  
 And every nation, that should lift again  
 Its hand against a brother, on its forehead  
 Would wear forevermore the curse of Cain! 40

Down the dark future, through long generations,  
 The echoing sounds grow fainter and then  
 cease;  
 And like a bell, with solemn, sweet vibrations,  
 I hear once more the voice of Christ say,  
 "Peace!"

Peace! and no longer from its brazen portals  
 The blast of War's great organ shakes the skies!  
 But beautiful as songs of the immortals,  
 The holy melodies of love arise.  
 1844 1845

### *Nuremberg*<sup>30</sup>

In the valley of the Pegnitz, where across broad  
 meadow-lands  
 Rise the blue Franconian mountains, Nuremberg,  
 the ancient, stands.

Quaint old town of toil and traffic, quaint old  
 town of art and song,  
 Memories haunt thy pointed gables, like the rooks  
 that round them throng:

Memories of the Middle Ages, when the em-  
 perors, rough and bold,  
 Had their dwelling in thy castle, time-defying,  
 centuries old;

And thy brave and thrifty burghers boasted, in  
 their uncouth rhyme,  
 That their great imperial city stretched its hand  
 through every clime.

<sup>30</sup> Characteristic of Longfellow's fondness for old Old World cities. At Nuremberg, Longfellow visited the home and grave of the sixteenth-century artist, Albrecht Dürer, and of his contemporary poet, Hans Sachs. He also examined the works of Peter Vischer in the Church of St. Sebald and of Adam Kraft in the Church of St. Lawrence, and he alludes also to the writings of the Renaissance poet, Melchior Pfingzer.

In the court-yard of the castle, bound with many  
 an iron band,  
 Stands the mighty linden planted by Queen  
 Cunigunde's hand; 10

On the square the oriel window, where in old  
 heroic days  
 Sat the poet Melchior singing Kaiser Maximilian's  
 praise.

Everywhere I see around me rise the wondrous  
 world of Art:  
 Fountains wrought with richest sculpture standing  
 in the common mart;

And above cathedral doorways saints and bishops  
 carved in stone,  
 By a former age commissioned as apostles to our  
 own.

In the church of sainted Sebald sleeps enshrined  
 his holy dust,  
 And in bronze the Twelve Apostles guard from  
 age to age their trust;

In the church of sainted Lawrence stands a pix  
 of sculpture rare,  
 Like the foamy sheaf of fountains, rising through  
 the painted air. 20

Here, when Art was still religion, with a simple,  
 reverent heart,  
 Lived and labored Albrecht Dürer, the Evangelist  
 of Art;

Hence in silence and in sorrow, toiling still with  
 busy hand,  
 Like an emigrant he wandered, seeking for the  
 Better Land.

*Emigravit*<sup>31</sup> is the inscription on the tombstone  
 where he lies;  
 Dead he is not, but departed,—for the artist  
 never dies.

Fairer seems the ancient city, and the sunshine  
 seems more fair,  
 That he once has trod its pavement, that he once  
 has breathed its air!

Through these streets so broad and stately, these  
 obscure and dismal lanes,

<sup>31</sup> "He has gone forth."

Walked of yore the Mastersingers, chanting  
rude poetic strains. 30

From remote and sunless suburbs came they to  
the friendly guild,  
Building nests in Fame's great temple, as in  
spouts the swallows build.

As the weaver plied the shuttle, wove he too the  
mystic rhyme,  
And the smith his iron measures hammered to  
the anvil's chime;

Thanking God, whose boundless wisdom makes  
the flowers of pocsy bloom  
In the forge's dust and cinders, in the tissues of  
the loom.

Herc Hans Sachs, the cobbler-poet, laureate of  
the gentle craft,  
Wiscst of the Twelve Wise Masters, in huge  
folios sang and laughed.

But his house is now an ale-house, with a nicely  
sanded floor,  
And a garland in the window, and his face above  
the door; 40

Painted by some humble artist, as in Adam  
Puschman's song,  
As the old man gray and dove-like, with his great  
beard white and long.

And at night the swart mechanic comes to  
drown his cark and care,  
Quaffing ale from pewter tankards, in the master's  
antique chair.

Vanished is the ancient splendor, and before my  
dreamy eye  
Wave these mingled shapes and figures, like a  
faded tapestry.

Not thy Councils, not thy Kaisers, win for thee  
the world's regard;  
But thy painter, Albrecht Dürer, and Hans Sachs,  
thy cobbler-bard.

Thus, O Nuremberg, a wanderer from a region  
far away,  
As he paced thy streets and court-yards, sang in  
thought his careless lay: 50

Gathering from the pavement's crevice, as a  
floweret of the soil,

The nobility of labor,—the long pedigree of toil.  
1844 1845

### *The Day Is Done*<sup>32</sup>

The day is done, and the darkness  
Falls from the wings of Night,  
As a feather is wafted downward  
From an eagle in his flight.

I see the lights of the village  
Gleam through the rain and the mist,  
And a feeling of sadness comes o'er me  
That my soul cannot resist:

A feeling of sadness and longing,  
That is not akin to pain, 10  
And resembles sorrow only  
As the mist resembles the rain.

Come, read to me some poem,  
Some simple and heartfelt lay,  
That shall soothe this restless feeling,  
And banish the thoughts of day.

Not from the grand old masters,  
Not from the bards sublime,  
Whose distant footsteps echo  
Through the corridors of Time. 20

For, like strains of martial music,  
Their mighty thoughts suggest  
Life's endless toil and endeavor;  
And to-night I long for rest.

Read from some humbler poet,  
Whose songs gushed from his heart,  
As showers from the clouds of summer,  
Or tears from the eyelids start;

Who, through long days of labor,  
And nights devoid of ease, 30  
Still heard in his soul the music  
Of wonderful melodies.

Such songs have power to quiet  
The restless pulse of care,

<sup>32</sup> Written as a poem to an anthology of minor poets entitled *The Waif: a Collection of Poems*, edited by Longfellow (Cambridge, Mass., 1845).

And come like the benediction  
That follows after prayer.

Then read from the treasured volume  
The poem of thy choice,  
And lend to the rhyme of the poet  
The beauty of thy voice.

And the night shall be filled with music,  
And the cares, that infest the day,  
Shall fold their tents, like the Arabs,  
And as silently steal away.

1844

1845

### *The Bridge*<sup>33</sup>

I stood on the bridge at midnight,  
As the clocks were striking the hour,  
And the moon rose o'er the city,  
Behind the dark church-tower.

I saw her bright reflection  
In the waters under me,  
Like a golden goblet falling  
And sinking into the sea.

And far in the hazy distance  
Of that lovely night in June,  
The blaze of the flaming furnace  
Gleamed redder than the moon.

Among the long, black rafters  
The wavering shadows lay,  
And the current that came from the ocean  
Seemed to lift and bear them away;

As, sweeping and eddying through them,  
Rose the belated tide,  
And, streaming into the moonlight,  
The seaweed floated wide.

And like those waters rushing  
Among the wooden piers,  
A flood of thoughts came o'er me  
That filled my eyes with tears.

How often, oh, how often,  
In the days that had gone by,  
I had stood on that bridge at midnight  
And gazed on that wave and sky!

<sup>33</sup> At first localized as "The Bridge over the Charles," the river separating Cambridge from Boston.

How often, oh, how often,  
I had wished that the ebbing tide  
Would bear me away on its bosom  
O'er the ocean wild and wide!

30

For my heart was hot and restless,  
And my life was full of care,  
And the burden laid upon me  
Seemed greater than I could bear.

40

But now it has fallen from me,  
It is buried in the sea;  
And only the sorrow of others  
Throws its shadow over me.

40

Yet whenever I cross the river  
On its bridge with wooden piers,  
Like the odor of brine from the ocean  
Comes the thought of other years.

And I think how many thousands  
Of care-encumbered men,  
Each bearing his burden of sorrow,  
Have crossed the bridge since then.

I see the long procession  
Still passing to and fro,  
The young heart hot and restless,  
And the old subdued and slow!

10

50

And forever and forever,  
As long as the river flows,  
As long as the heart has passions,  
As long as life has woes;

The moon and its broken reflection  
And its shadows shall appear,  
As the symbol of love in heaven,  
And its wavering image here.

1845

60

1845

### *Wanderer's Night-Songs*

Translated from the German of Goethe

#### I

Thou that from the heavens art,  
Every pain and sorrow stillest,  
And the doubly wretched heart  
Doubly with refreshment fillest,  
I am weary with contending!  
Why this rapture and unrest?

Peace descending  
Come, ah, come into my breast!

## II

O'er all the hill-tops  
Is quiet now,  
In all the tree-tops  
Hearest thou  
Hardly a breath;  
The birds are asleep in the trees:  
Wait; soon like these  
Thou too shalt rest.

1845

1845

*The Old Clock on the Stairs*<sup>34</sup>

Somewhat back from the village street  
Stands the old-fashioned country-seat.  
Across its antique portico  
Tall poplar-trees their shadows throw;  
And from its station in the hall  
An ancient timepiece says to all,—  
"Forever—never!  
Never—forever!"

Half-way up the stairs it stands,  
And points and beckons with its hands  
From its case of massive oak,  
Like a monk, who, under his cloak,  
Crosses himself, and sighs, alas!  
With sorrowful voice to all who pass,—  
"Forever—never!  
Never—forever!"

By day its voice is low and light;  
But in the silent dead of night,  
Distinct as a passing footstep's fall,  
It echos along the vacant hall,  
Along the ceiling, along the floor,

10

10

20

And seems to say, at each chamber-door,—  
"Forever—never!  
Never—forever!"

Through days of sorrow and of mirth,  
Through days of death and days of birth,  
Through every swift vicissitude  
Of changeful time, unchanged it has stood,  
And as if, like God, it all things saw,  
It calmly repeats those words of awe,—  
"Forever—never!  
Never—forever!"

30

In that mansion used to be  
Free-hearted Hospitality;  
His great fires up the chimney roared;  
The stranger feasted at his board;  
But, like the skeleton at the feast,  
That warning timepiece never ceased,—  
"Forever—never!  
Never—forever!"

40

There groups of merry children played,  
There youths and maidens dreaming strayed;  
O precious hours! O golden prime,  
And affluence of love and time!  
Even as a miser counts his gold,  
Those hours the ancient timepiece told,—  
"Forever—never!  
Never—forever!"

From that chamber, clothed in white,  
The bride came forth on her wedding night;  
There, in that silent room below,  
The dead lay in his shroud of snow;  
And in the hush that followed the prayer,  
Was heard the old clock on the stair,—  
"Forever—never!  
Never—forever!"

50

All are scattered now and fled,  
Some are married, some are dead;  
And when I ask, with throbs of pain,  
"Ah! when shall they all meet again?"  
As in the days long since gone by,  
The ancient timepiece makes reply,—  
"Forever—never!  
Never—forever!"

60

Never here, forever there,  
Where all parting, pain, and care,  
And death, and time shall disappear,—

<sup>34</sup> The house commemorated in this poem is the Gold house, now known as the Plunkett mansion in Pittsfield, Mass., the homestead of Mrs. Longfellow's maternal grandmother, whither the Longfellows went after their marriage in the summer of 1843. The poem was written in November, 1845, when, under date of the twelfth of that month, Longfellow wrote in his journal: "Began a poem on a clock, with the words 'forever, never,' as the burden; suggested by the words of [Jacques Bridaine] the old French missionary, who said of eternity, *C'est une pendule dont le balancier dit et redit sans cesse ces deux mots seulement dans le silence des tombeaux, — Toujours, jamais! jamais, toujours! Et pendant ces effrayables révolutions, un réprouvé s'écrie, 'Quelle heure est-il?' et la voix d'un autre misérable lui répond, 'L'Eternité.'*"

Forever there, but never here!  
 The horologe of Eternity  
 Sayeth this incessantly,—  
     "Forever—never!  
     Never—forever!"

1845

### *The Arrow and the Song* <sup>35</sup>

I shot an arrow into the air,  
 It fell to earth, I knew not where;  
 For, so swiftly it flew, the sight  
 Could not follow it in its flight.

I breathed a song into the air,  
 It fell to earth, I knew not where;  
 For who has sight so keen and strong,  
 That it can follow the flight of song?

Long, long afterward, in an oak  
 I found the arrow still unbroke;  
 And the song, from beginning to end,  
 I found again in the heart of a friend.

1845

### *Seaweed* <sup>36</sup>

When descends on the Atlantic  
 The gigantic  
 Storm-wind of the equinox,  
 Landward in his wrath he scourges  
 The toiling surges,  
 Laden with seaweed from the rocks:

From Bermuda's reefs; from edges  
 Of sunken ledges,  
 In some far-off, bright Azore;  
 From Bahama, and the dashing,  
 Silver-flashing  
 Surges of San Salvador;

From the tumbling surf, that buries  
 The Orkneyan skerries,

<sup>35</sup> On October 16, 1845, Longfellow wrote in his diary, "Before church, wrote *The Arrow and the Song*, which came into my mind as I stood with my back to the fire, and glanced on to the paper with arrow's speed. Literally an improvisation." The poem seems also to have been inspired by a quatrain in Goethe's *Sprüche in Reimen* (*Proverbs in Rhymes*).

<sup>36</sup> A poem illustrating, in the first four stanzas, the flawless versification, verbal music, and vivid imagery of Longfellow at his best, and in the last four, the homiletic tone which the taste of a later day finds insipid.

Answering the hoarse Hebrides;  
 And from wrecks of ships, and drifting  
 70 Spars, uplifting  
 On the desolate, rainy seas;—

Ever drifting, drifting, drifting  
 On the shifting  
 20 Currents of the restless main;  
 Till in sheltered coves, and reaches  
 Of sandy beaches,  
 All have found repose again.

So when storms of wild emotion  
 Strike the ocean  
 Of the poet's soul, ere long  
 From each cave and rocky fastness,  
 In its vastness,  
 Floats some fragment of a song: 30

From the far-off isles enchanted,  
 Heaven has planted  
 10 With the golden fruit of Truth;  
 From the flashing surf, whose vision  
 Gleams Elysian  
 In the tropic clime of Youth;

From the strong Will, and the Endeavor  
 That forever  
 Wrestle with the tides of Fate;  
 From the wreck of Hopcs far-scattered, 40  
 Tempest-shattered,  
 Floating waste and desolate;—

Ever drifting, drifting, drifting  
 On the shifting  
 Currents of the restless heart;  
 Till at length in books recorded,  
 They, like hoarded  
 Household words, no more depart.

10

1844

1845

### *The Builders* <sup>37</sup>

All are architects of Fate,  
 Working in these walls of Time;  
 Some with massive deeds and great,  
 Some with ornaments of rhyme.

<sup>37</sup> Typical of his "Psalms," this poem, written some years after his "Psalm of Life," illustrates both Longfellow's didacticism as an artist and his faith in free will and individual responsibility as a moralist.

Nothing useless is, or low;  
 Each thing in its place is best;  
 And what seems but idle show  
 Strengthens and supports the rest.

For the structure that we raise,  
 Time is with materials filled;  
 Our to-days and yesterdays  
 Are the blocks with which we build.

Truly shape and fashion these;  
 Leave no yawning gaps between;  
 Think not, because no man sees,  
 Such things will remain unseen.

In the elder days of Art,  
 Builders wrought with greatest care  
 Each minute and unseen part;  
 For the Gods see everywhere.

Let us do our work as well,  
 Both the unseen and the seen;  
 Make the house, where Gods may dwell,  
 Beautiful, entire, and clean.

Else our lives are incomplete,  
 Standing in these walls of Time,  
 Broken stairways, where the feet  
 Stumble as they seek to climb.

Build to-day, then, strong and sure,  
 With a firm and ample base;  
 And ascending and secure  
 Shall to-morrow find its place.

Thus alone can we attain  
 To those turrets, where the eye  
 Sees the world as one vast plain,  
 And one boundless reach of sky.

1846

### *Resignation* <sup>38</sup>

There is no flock, however watched and tended,  
 But one dead lamb is there!  
 There is no fireside, howsoever defended,  
 But has one vacant chair!

The air is full of farewells to the dying,  
 And mournings for the dead;

<sup>37</sup> Written in the autumn of 1848, following the death of his little daughter Fanny.

The heart of Rachel, for her children crying,<sup>39</sup>  
 Will not be comforted!

Let us be patient! These severe afflictions  
 Not from the ground arise, 10  
 But oftentimes celestial benedictions  
 Assume this dark disguise.

We see but dimly through the mists and vapors;  
 Amid these earthly damps  
 What seem to us but sad, funeral tapers  
 May be heaven's distant lamps.

There is no Death! What seems so is transition;  
 This life of mortal breath  
 Is but a suburb of the life elysian,<sup>40</sup>  
 Whose portal we call Death. 20

She is not dead,—the child of our affection,—  
 But gone unto that school  
 Where she no longer needs our poor protection,  
 And Christ himself doth rule.

In that great cloister's stillness and seclusion,  
 By guardian angels led,  
 Safe from temptation, safe from sin's pollution,  
 She lives, whom we call dead.

Day after day we think what she is doing  
 In those bright realms of air; 30  
 Year after year, her tender steps pursuing,  
 Behold her grown more fair.

Thus do we walk with her, and keep unbroken  
 The bond which nature gives,  
 Thinking that our remembrance, though unspoken,  
 May reach her where she lives.

Not as a child shall we again behold her;  
 For when with raptures wild  
 In our embraces we again enfold her,  
 She will not be a child; 40

But a fair maiden, in her Father's mansion,<sup>41</sup>  
 Clothed with celestial grace;  
 And beautiful with all the soul's expansion  
 Shall we behold her face.

And though at times impetuous with emotion  
 And anguish long suppressed,  
 The swelling heart heaves moaning like the ocean,  
 That cannot be at rest,—

<sup>39</sup> See Jeremiah 31:15.

<sup>40</sup> Pertaining to Elysium.

<sup>41</sup> John 14:2.



We will be patient, and assuage the feeling  
 We may not wholly stay;  
 By silence sanctifying, not concealing,  
 The grief that must have way.

1848

1849

### *The Secret of the Sea*

Ah! what pleasant visions haunt me  
 As I gaze upon the sea!  
 All the old romantic legends,  
 All my dreams, come back to me.

Sails of silk and ropes of sandal,  
 Such as gleam in ancient lore;  
 And the singing of the sailors,  
 And the answer from the shore!

Most of all, the Spanish ballad  
 Haunts me oft, and tarries long,  
 Of the noble Count Arnaldos  
 And the sailor's mystic song.

Like the long waves on a sea-beach,  
 Where the sand as silver shines,  
 With a soft, monotonous cadence,  
 Flow its unrhymed lyric lines;—

Telling how the Count Arnaldos,  
 With his hawk upon his hand,  
 Saw a fair and stately galley,  
 Steering onward to the land;—

20

How he heard the ancient helmsman  
 Chant a song so wild and clear,  
 That the sailing sea-bird slowly  
 Poised upon the mast to hear,

Till his soul was full of longing,  
 And he cried, with impulse strong,—  
 "Helmsman! for the love of heaven,  
 Teach me, too, that wondrous song!"

"Wouldst thou,"—so the helmsman answered,  
 "Learn the secret of the sea?  
 Only those who brave its dangers  
 Comprehend its mystery!"

30

In each sail that skims the horizon,  
 In each landward-blowing breeze,  
 I behold that stately galley,  
 Hear those mournful melodies;

10

Till my soul is full of longing  
 For the secret of the sea,  
 And the heart of the great ocean  
 Sends a thrilling pulse through me.

40

### *The Building of the Ship* <sup>42</sup>

"Build me straight, O worthy Master!  
 Stanch and strong, a goodly vessel,  
 That shall laugh at all disaster,  
 And with wave and whirlwind wrestle!"

The merchant's word  
 Delighted the Master heard;  
 For his heart was in his work, and the heart  
 Giveth grace unto every Art.

A quiet smile played round his lips,  
 As the eddies and dimples of the tide

10

Play round the bows of ships,  
 That steadily at anchor ride.  
 And with a voice that was full of glee,  
 He answered, "Ere long we will launch  
 A vessel as goodly, and strong, and stanch,  
 As ever weathered a wintry sea!"

And first with nicest skill and art,  
 Perfect and finished in every part,  
 A little model the Master wrought,  
 Which should be to the larger plan  
 What the child is to the man,

20

Its counterpart in miniature;  
 That with a hand more swift and sure  
 The greater labor might be brought  
 To answer to his inward thought.  
 And as he labored, his mind ran o'er  
 The various ships that were built of yore,  
 And above them, all and strangest of all

<sup>42</sup> Although the form of this poem was inspired by Schiller's *Song of the Bell*, its real inspiration lay in the poet's deep concern that the Union should be preserved. It is said that the impassioned conclusion of the poem, beginning "Thou too, sail on, O Ship of State," had a great influence in arousing vast audiences to support the Union when recited by eloquent readers like Fanny Kemble and Noah Brooks. A recitation before Lincoln is said to have agitated the President profoundly and to have prompted the simple comment, "It is a wonderful gift to be able to stir men like that."

Towered the Great Harry,<sup>43</sup> crank and tall,  
 Whose picture was hanging on the wall,  
 With bows and stern raised high in air,  
 And balconies hanging here and there,  
 And signal lanterns and flags afloat,  
 And eight round towers, like those that frown  
 From some old castle, looking down  
 Upon the drawbridge and the moat.  
 And he said with a smile, "Our ship, I wis,  
 Shall be of another form than this!"

It was of another form, indeed;  
 Built for freight, and yet for speed,  
 A beautiful and gallant craft;  
 Broad in the beam, that the stress of the blast,  
 Pressing down upon sail and mast,  
 Might not the sharp bows overwhelm;  
 Broad in the beam, but sloping aft  
 With graceful curve and slow degrees,  
 That she might be docile to the helm,  
 And that the currents of parted seas,  
 Closing behind, with mighty force,  
 Might aid and not impede her course.

In the ship-yard stood the Master,  
 With the model of the vessel,  
 That should laugh at all disaster,  
 And with wave and whirlwind wrestle!

Covering many a rood of ground,  
 Lay the timber piled around;  
 Timber of chestnut, and elm, and oak,  
 And scattered here and there, with these,  
 The knarred<sup>44</sup> and crooked cedar knees;  
 Brought from regions far away,  
 From Pascagoula's<sup>45</sup> sunny bay,  
 And the banks of the roaring Roanoke!<sup>46</sup>  
 Ah! what a wondrous thing it is  
 To note how many wheels of toil  
 One thought, one word, can set in motion!  
 There's not a ship that sails the ocean,  
 But every climate, every soil,  
 Must bring its tribute, great or small,  
 And help to build the wooden wall!

The sun was rising o'er the sea,  
 And long the level shadows lay,

<sup>43</sup> The famous ship of Henry VII, built in 1488.

<sup>44</sup> Knotty.

<sup>45</sup> The Pascagoula River is in Mississippi.

<sup>46</sup> The Roanoke rises in Virginia and flows through Virginia.

As if they, too, the beams would be  
 Of some great, airy argosy,  
 Framed and launched in a single day.  
 That silent architect, the sun,  
 Had hewn and laid them every one,  
 Ere the work of man was yet begun.  
 Beside the Master, when he spoke,  
 A youth, against an anchor leaning,  
 Listened, to catch his slightest meaning.  
 Only the long waves, as they broke  
 In ripples on the pebbly beach,  
 Interrupted the old man's speech.

Beautiful they were, in sooth,  
 The old man and the fiery youth!  
 The old man, in whose busy brain  
 Many a ship that sailed the main  
 Was modelled o'er and o'er again;—  
 The fiery youth, who was to be  
 The heir of his dexterity,  
 The heir of his house, and his daughter's hand,  
 When he had built and launched from land  
 What the elder head had planned.  
 "Thus," said he, "will we build this ship!  
 Lay square the blocks upon the slip,<sup>47</sup>  
 And follow well this plan of mine.  
 Choose the timbers with greatest care;  
 Of all that is unsound beware;  
 For only what is sound and strong,  
 To this vessel shall belong.  
 Cedar of Maine and Georgia pine  
 Here together shall combine.  
 A goodly frame, and a goodly fame,  
 And the UNION be her name!  
 For the day that gives her to the sea  
 Shall give my daughter unto thee!"

The Master's word  
 Enraptured the young man heard;  
 And as he turned his face aside,  
 With a look of joy and a thrill of pride,  
 Standing before  
 Her father's door,  
 He saw the form of his promised bride.  
 The sun shone on her golden hair,  
 And her cheek was glowing fresh and fair,  
 With the breath of morn and the soft sea air.  
 Like a beauteous barge was she,

<sup>47</sup> The inclined plane on which the ship is built and from which it slides into the water.

Still at rest on the sandy beach,  
Just beyond the billow's reach;  
But he  
Was the restless, seething, stormy sea!

Ah, how skilful grows the hand  
That obeyeth Love's command!  
It is the heart, and not the brain,  
That to the highest doth attain,  
And he who followeth Love's behest  
Far excelleth all the rest!

Thus with the rising of the sun  
Was the noble task begun,  
And soon throughout the ship-yard's bounds  
Were heard the intermingled sounds  
Of axes and of mallets, plied  
With vigorous arms on every side;  
Plied so deftly and so well,  
That, ere the shadows of evening fell,  
The keel of oak for a noble ship,  
Scarfed <sup>48</sup> and bolted, straight and strong,  
Was lying ready, and stretched along  
The blocks, well placed upon the slip.  
Happy, thrice happy, every one  
Who sees his labor well begun,  
And not perplexed and multiplied,  
By idly waiting for time and tide!  
And when the hot, long day was o'er,  
The young man at the Master's door  
Sat with the maiden calm and still,  
And within the porch, a little more  
Removed beyond the evening chill,  
The father sat, and told them tales  
Of wrecks in the great September gales,  
Of pirates coasting the Spanish Main,  
And ships that never came back again,  
The chance and change of a sailor's life,  
Want and plenty, rest and strife,  
His roving fancy, like the wind,  
That nothing can stay and nothing can bind,  
And the magic charm of foreign lands,  
With shadows of palms, and shining sands,  
Where the tumbling surf,  
O'er the coral reefs of Madagascar,  
Washes the feet of the swarthy Lascar,  
As he lies alone and asleep on the turf.  
And the trembling maiden held her breath  
At the tales of that awful, pitiless sea,

<sup>48</sup> Overlapped.

With all its terror and mystery,  
The dim, dark sea, so like unto Death,  
120 That divides and yet unites mankind!  
And whenever the old man paused, a gleam  
From the bowl of his pipe would awhile illumine  
The silent group in the twilight gloom, 170  
And thoughtful faces, as in a dream;  
And for a moment one might mark  
What had been hidden by the dark,  
That the head of the maiden lay at rest,  
Tenderly, on the young man's breast!

Day by day the vessel grew,  
With timbers fashioned strong and true, 130  
Stemson and keelson and sternson-knee,<sup>49</sup>  
Till, framed with perfect symmetry,  
A skeleton ship rose up to view! 180  
And around the bows and along the side  
The heavy hammers and mallets plied,  
Till after many a week, at length,  
Wonderful for form and strength,  
Sublime in its enormous bulk,  
Loomed aloft the shadowy hulk!  
And around it columns of smoke, upwreathing, 140  
Rose from the boiling, bubbling, seething  
Caldron, that glowed,  
And overflowed 190  
With the black tar, heated for the sheathing.  
And amid the clamors  
Of clattering hammers,  
He who listened heard now and then  
The song of the Master and his men:—

“Build me straight, O worthy Master,  
150 Stanch and strong, a goodly vessel,  
That shall laugh at all disaster,  
And with wave and whirlwind wrestle!”

With oaken brace and copper band, 200  
Lay the rudder on the sand,  
That, like a thought, should have control  
Over the movement of the whole;  
And near it the anchor, whose giant hand  
Would reach down and grapple with the land,  
And immovable and fast  
160 Hold the great ship against the bellowing blast!  
And at the bows an image stood,  
By a cunning artist carved in wood,

<sup>49</sup> Technical terms designating foundation timbers; indicative of Longfellow's knowledge of ships, much of which he doubtless picked up as a lad in Portland, Maine.

With robes of white, that far behind  
 Seemed to be fluttering in the wind.  
 It was not shaped in a classic mould,  
 Not like a Nymph or Goddess of old,  
 Or Naiad rising from the water,  
 But modelled from the Master's daughter!  
 On many a dreary and misty night,  
 'T will be seen by the rays of the signal light,  
 Speeding along through the rain and the dark,  
 Like a ghost in its snow-white sark,<sup>50</sup>  
 The pilot of some phantom bark,  
 Guiding the vessel, in its flight,  
 By a path none other knows aright!

Behold, at last,  
 Each tall and tapering mast  
 Is swung into its place;  
 Shrouds and stays \*  
 Holding it firm and fast!

Long ago,  
 In the deer-haunted forests of Maine,  
 When upon mountain and plain  
 Lay the snow,  
 They fell,—those lordly pines!  
 Those grand, majestic pines!  
 'Mid shouts and cheers  
 The jaded steers,  
 Panting beneath the goad,  
 Dragged down the weary, winding road  
 Those captive kings so straight and tall,  
 To be shorn of their streaming hair,  
 And naked and bare,  
 To feel the stress and the strain  
 Of the wind and the reeling main,  
 Whose roar  
 Would remind them forevermore  
 Of their native forests they should not see again.

<sup>50</sup> Shroud.

\* I wish to anticipate a criticism on this passage, by stating that sometimes, though not usually, vessels are launched fully sparred and rigged. I have availed myself of the exception as better suited to my purpose than the general rule; but the reader will see that it is neither a blunder nor a poetic license. On this subject a friend in Portland, Maine, writes me thus: "In this State, and also, I am told, in New York, ships are sometimes rigged upon the stocks, in order to save time, and to make a show. There was a fine large ship launched last summer at Ellsworth, fully sparred and rigged. Some years ago a ship was launched here, with her rigging, spars, sails, and cargo aboard. She sailed the next day and—was never heard of again! I hope this will not be the fate of your poem!"

210 And everywhere  
 The slender, graceful spars  
 Poise aloft in the air,  
 And at the mast-head,  
 White, blue, and red,  
 250 A flag unrolls the stripes and stars.  
 Ah! when the wanderer, lonely, friendless,  
 In foreign harbors shall behold  
 That flag unrolled,  
 'T will be as a friendly hand  
 220 Stretched out from his native land,  
 Filling his heart with memories sweet and endless!  
 All is finished! and at length  
 Has come the bridal day  
 Of beauty and of strength.  
 260 To-day the vessel shall be launched!  
 With fleecy clouds the sky is blanched,  
 And o'er the bay,  
 Slowly, in all his splendors dight,  
 The great sun rises to behold the sight.  
 230 The ocean old,  
 Centuries old,  
 Strong as youth, and as uncontrolled,  
 Paces restless to and fro,  
 Up and down the sands of gold.  
 270 His beating heart is not at rest;  
 And far and wide,  
 With ceaseless flow,  
 His beard of snow  
 Heaves with the heaving of his breast.  
 240 He waits impatient for his bride.  
 There she stands,  
 With her foot upon the sands,  
 Decked with flags and streamers gay,  
 In honor of her marriage day,  
 280 Her snow-white signals fluttering, blending,  
 Round her like a veil descending,  
 Ready to be  
 The bride of the gray old sea.  
 On the deck another bride  
 Is standing by her lover's side.  
 Shadows from the flags and shrouds,  
 Like the shadows cast by clouds,  
 Broken by many a sunny fleck,  
 Fall around them on the deck.  
 290 The prayer is said,  
 The service read.

The joyous bridegroom bows his head!  
 And in tears the good old Master  
 Shakes the brown hand of his son,  
 Kisses his daughter's glowing cheek  
 In silence, for he cannot speak,  
 And ever faster  
 Down his own the tears begin to run.  
 The worthy pastor—  
 The shepherd of that wandering flock,  
 That has the ocean for its wold,  
 That has the vessel for its fold,  
 Leaping ever from rock to rock—  
 Spake, with accents mild and clear,  
 Words of warning, words of cheer,  
 But tedious to the bridegroom's ear.  
 He knew the chart  
 Of the sailor's heart,  
 All its pleasures and its griefs,  
 All its shallows and rocky reefs,  
 All those secret currents, that flow  
 With such resistless undertow,  
 And lift and drift, with terrible force,  
 The will from its moorings and its course.  
 Therefore he spake, and thus said he:—  
 "Like unto ships far off at sea,  
 Outward or homeward bound, are we.  
 Before, behind, and all around,  
 Floats and swings the horizon's bound,  
 Seems at its distant rim to rise  
 And climb the crystal wall of the skies,  
 And then again to turn and sink,  
 As if we could slide from its outer brink.  
 Ah! it is not the sea,  
 It is not the sea that sinks and shelves,  
 But ourselves  
 That rock and rise  
 With endless and uneasy motion,  
 Now touching the very skies,  
 Now sinking into the depths of ocean.  
 Ah! if our souls but poise and swing  
 Like the compass in its brazen ring,  
 Ever level and ever true  
 To the toil and the task we have to do,  
 We shall sail securely, and safely reach  
 The Fortunate Isles, on whose shining beach  
 The sights we see, and the sounds we hear,  
 Will be those of joy and not of fear!"

Then the Master,

With a gesture of command,  
 Waved his hand;  
 And at the word,  
 Loud and sudden there was heard,  
 All around them and below,  
 The sound of hammers, blow on blow,  
 Knocking away the shores and spurs.<sup>51</sup>

300 And see! she stirs!  
 She starts,—she moves,—she seems to feel  
 The thrill of life along her keel,  
 350 And, spurning with her foot the ground,  
 With one exulting, joyous bound,  
 She leaps into the ocean's arms!

And lo! from the assembled crowd  
 There rose a shout, prolonged and loud,  
 That to the ocean seemed to say,  
 "Take her, O bridegroom, old and gray,  
 310 Take her to thy protecting arms,  
 With all her youth and all her charms!"

How beautiful she is! How fair  
 360 She lies within those arms, that press  
 Her form with many a soft caress  
 Of tenderness and watchful care!  
 Sail forth into the sea, O ship!  
 Through wind and wave, right onward steer!  
 The moistened eye, the trembling lip,  
 320 Are not the signs of doubt or fear.

Sail forth into the sea of life,  
 O gentle, loving, trusting wife,  
 And safe from all adversity  
 370 Upon the bosom of that sea  
 Thy comings and thy goings be!  
 For gentleness and love and trust  
 Prevail o'er angry wave and gust;  
 And in the wreck of noble lives  
 Something immortal still survives!

330 Thou, too, sail on, O Ship of State!  
 Sail on, O UNION, strong and great!  
 Humanity with all its fears,  
 With all the hopes of future years,  
 380 Is hanging breathless on thy fate!  
 We know what Master laid thy keel,  
 What Workmen wrought thy ribs of steel,  
 Who made each mast, and sail, and rope,  
 What anvils rang, what hammers beat,

<sup>51</sup> Braces and props used to hold the vessel upright before launching it.

In what a forge and what a heat  
 Were shaped the anchors of thy hope!  
 Fear not each sudden sound and shock,  
 'T is of the wave and not the rock;  
 'T is but the flapping of the sail,  
 And not a rent made by the gale!  
 In spite of rock and tempest's roar,

390

In spite of false lights on the shore,  
 Sail on, nor fear to breast the sea!  
 Our hearts, our hopes, are all with thee,  
 Our hearts, our hopes, our prayers, our tears,  
 Our faith triumphant o'er our fears,  
 Are all with thee,—are all with thee!

1849

1849

*Gaspar Becerra*<sup>52</sup>

By his evening fire the artist  
 Pondered o'er his secret shame;  
 Baffled, weary, and disheartened,  
 Still he muscd, and dreamed of fame.

'T was an image of the Virgin  
 That had tasked his utmost skill;  
 But, alas! his fair ideal  
 Vanished and escaped him still.

From a distant Eastern island  
 Had the precious wood been brought;  
 Day and night the anxious master  
 At his toil untiring wrought;

Till, discouraged and desponding,  
 Sat he now in shadows deep,  
 And the day's humiliation  
 Found oblivion in sleep.

Then a voice cried, "Rise, O master!  
 From the burning brand of oak  
 Shape the thought that stirs within thee!"  
 And the startled artist woke,—

Woke, and from the smoking embers  
 Seized and quenched the glowing wood;  
 And therefrom he carved an image,  
 And he saw that it was good.

O thou sculptor, painter, poet!  
 Take this lesson to thy heart:  
 That is best which lieth nearest;  
 Shape from that thy work of art.

1849

1849

<sup>52</sup> Based on the story which Longfellow read in 1849 in William Stirling-Maxwell's *Annals of the Artists of Spain* (1848), p. 241. For a time he contemplated writing a drama based on Stirling-Maxwell's life of Murillo in Spain.

*Children*<sup>53</sup>

Come to me, O ye children!  
 For I hear you at your play,  
 And the questions that perplexed me  
 Have vanished quite away.

Ye open the eastern windows,  
 That look towards the sun,  
 Where thoughts are singing swallows,  
 And the brooks of morning run.

In your hearts are the birds and the sunshine,  
 In your thoughts the brooklet's flow,  
 But in mine is the wind of Autumn  
 And the first fall of the snow.

10

10

Ah! what would the world be to us  
 If the children were no more?  
 We should dread the desert behind us  
 Worse than the dark before.

20

20

What the leaves are to the forest,  
 With light and air for food,  
 Ere their sweet and tender juices  
 Have been hardened into wood,—

That to the world are children;  
 Through them it feels the glow  
 Of a brighter and sunnier climate  
 Than reaches the trunks below.

Come to me, O ye children!  
 And whisper in my ear  
 What the birds and the winds are singing  
 In your sunny atmosphere.

For what are all our contrivings,  
 And the wisdom of our books,

30

<sup>53</sup> Written in 1848, published in the *Courtship of Miles Standish* volume of 1858.

When compared with your carcases,  
And the gladness of your looks?

Ye are better than all the ballads  
That ever were sung or said;  
For ye are living poems,  
And all the rest are dead.

1848

1858

### *The Warden of the Cinque Ports* <sup>54</sup>

A mist was driving down the British Channel,  
The day was just begun,  
And through the window-panes, on floor and panel,  
Streamed the red autumn sun.

It glanced on flowing flag and rippling pennon,  
And the white sails of ships;  
And, from the frowning rampart, the black cannon  
Hailed it with feverish lips.

Sandwich and Romney, Hastings, Hithc, and  
Dover

Were all alert that day, 10  
To see the French war-steamers speeding over,  
When the fog cleared away.

Sullen and silent, and like couchant lions,  
Their cannon, through the night,  
Holding their breath, had watched, in grim defiance,  
The sea-coast opposite.

And now they roared at drum-beat from their  
stations

On every citadel;  
Each answering each, with morning salutations,  
That all was well. 20

And down the coast, all taking up the burden,  
Replied the distant forts,

As if to summon from his sleep the Warden  
And Lord of the Cinque Ports.

Him shall no sunshine from the fields of azure,  
No drum-beat from the wall,  
No morning gun from the black fort's embrasure,  
Awaken with its call!

No more, surveying with an eye impartial  
The long line of the coast, 30

Shall the gaunt figure of the old Field Marshal  
Be seen upon his post!

For in the night, unseen, a single warrior,  
In sombre harness mailed,  
Dreaded of man, and surnamed the Destroyer,  
The rampart wall had scaled.

He passed into the chamber of the sleeper,  
The dark and silent room,  
And as he entered, darker grew, and deeper,  
The silence and the gloom. 40

He did not pause to parley or dissemble  
But smote the Warden hoar;  
Ah! what a blow! that made all England tremble  
And groan from shore to shore.

Meanwhile, without, the surly cannon waited,  
The sun rose bright o'erhead;  
Nothing in Nature's aspect intimated  
That a great man was dead.

1852

1852

### *My Lost Youth* <sup>55</sup>

Often I think of the beautiful town  
That is seated by the sea;  
Often in thought go up and down  
The pleasant streets of that dear old town,  
And my youth comes back to me.  
And a verse of a Lapland song  
Is haunting my memory still:  
"A boy's will is the wind's will,  
And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts,"  
I can see the shadowy lines of its trees, 10  
And catch, in sudden gleams,

<sup>55</sup> Justly esteemed one of Longfellow's finest lyrics. It grew out of youthful experiences recollected in tranquillity. During one of his visits to Portland in 1846, Longfellow took a long walk round Mountjoy's hill and down to the old Fort Lawrence, where, he says, "I lay down in one of the embrasures and listened to the lashing, lulling sound of the sea just at my feet. It was a beautiful afternoon, and the harbor was full of white sails, coming and departing. Meditated a poem on the Old Fort." In 1855, in Cambridge, he wrote in his journal for March 29: "At night as I lie in bed, a poem comes into my mind,—a memory of Portland,—my native town, the city by the sea.

Sieda la terra dove nato fui  
Sulla marina.

"March 30. Wrote the poem; and am rather pleased with it, and with the bringing in of the two lines of the old Lapland song,

A boy's will is the wind's will,  
And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts."

<sup>54</sup> Written on October 14, 1852, in commemoration of the Duke of Wellington, who had died the preceding month. Wellington was Lord Warden of the five seaports named in line 9.

The sheen of the far-surrounding seas,  
 And islands that were the Hesperides  
 Of all my boyish dreams.  
 And the burden of that old song,  
 Its murmurs and whispers still:  
 "A boy's will is the wind's will,  
 And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts."

I remember the black wharves and the slips,  
 And the sea-tides tossing free; 20  
 And Spanish sailors with bearded lips,  
 And the beauty and mystery of the ships,  
 And the magic of the sea.  
 And the voice of that wayward song  
 Is singing and saying still:  
 "A boy's will is the wind's will,  
 And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts."

I remember the bulwarks by the shore,  
 And the fort upon the hill;  
 The sunrise gun, with its hollow roar, 30  
 The drum-beat repeated o'er and o'er,  
 And the bugle wild and shrill.  
 And the music of that old song  
 Throbs in my memory still:  
 "A boy's will is the wind's will,  
 And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts."

I remember the sea-fight far away,<sup>56</sup>  
 How it thundered o'er the tide!  
 And the dead captains, as they lay  
 In their graves, o'erlooking the tranquil bay 40  
 Where they in battle died.  
 And the sound of that mournful song  
 Goes through me with a thrill:  
 "A boy's will is the wind's will,  
 And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts."

I can see the breezy dome of groves,  
 The shadows of Deering's Woods;  
 And the friendships old and the early loves  
 Come back with a Sabbath sound, as of doves  
 In quiet neighborhoods. 50  
 And the verse of that sweet old song,  
 It flutters and murmurs still:  
 "A boy's will is the wind's will,  
 And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts."

<sup>56</sup> A reference to the engagement which took place off Portland in 1813 between the British brig *Boxer* and the American brig *Enterprise*. The *Enterprise* won the encounter. The captains of both ships were killed and buried side by side in the cemetery on Mountjoy. Longfellow, a lad of six, was present at the funeral.

I remember the gleams and glooms that dart  
 Across the school-boy's brain;  
 The song and the silence in the heart,  
 That in part are prophecies, and in part  
 Are longings wild and vain.  
 And the voice of that fitful song 60  
 Sings on, and is never still:  
 "A boy's will is the wind's will,  
 And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts."

There are things of which I may not speak;  
 There are dreams that cannot die;  
 There are thoughts that make the strong heart weak,  
 And bring a pallor into the cheek,  
 And a mist before the eye.  
 And the words of that fatal song  
 Come over me like a chill: 70  
 "A boy's will is the wind's will,  
 And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts."

Strange to me now are the forms I meet  
 When I visit the dear old town;  
 But the native air is pure and sweet,  
 And the trees that o'ershadow each well-known  
 street,  
 As they balance up and down,  
 Are singing the beautiful song,  
 Are sighing and whispering still:  
 "A boy's will is the wind's will, 80  
 And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts."

And Deering's Woods are fresh and fair,  
 And with joy that is almost pain  
 My heart goes back to wander there,  
 And among the dreams of the days that were,  
 I find my lost youth again.  
 And the strange and beautiful song,  
 The groves are repeating it still:  
 "A boy's will is the wind's will,  
 And the thoughts of youth are long, long  
 thoughts." 90

1855 1858

### *The Children's Hour*

Between the dark and the daylight,  
 When the night is beginning to lower,  
 Comes a pause in the day's occupations,  
 That is known as the Children's Hour.  
 I hear in the chamber above me  
 The patter of little feet,



The sound of a door that is opened,  
And voices soft and sweet.

From my study I see in the lamplight,  
Descending the broad hall stair,  
Grave Alice, and laughing Allegra,  
And Edith with golden hair.

A whisper, and then a silence:  
Yet I know by their merry eyes  
They are plotting and planning together  
To take me by surprise.

A sudden rush from the stairway,  
A sudden raid from the hall!  
By three doors left unguarded  
They enter my castle wall!

They climb up into my turret  
O'er the arms and back of my chair;  
If I try to escape, they surround me;  
They seem to be everywhere.

They almost devour me with kisses,  
Their arms about me entwine,  
Till I think of the Bishop of Bingen  
In his Mouse-Tower on the Rhine!

Do you think, O blue-eyed banditti,  
Because you have scaled the wall,  
Such an old mustache as I am  
Is not a match for you all!

I have you fast in my fortress,  
And will not let you depart,  
But put you down into the dungeon  
In the round-tower of my heart.

And there will I keep you forever,  
Yes, forever and a day,  
Till the walls shall crumble to ruin,  
And moulder in dust away!

1859

1860

### *Paul Revere's Ride* <sup>57</sup>

Listen, my children, and you shall hear  
Of the midnight ride of Paul Revere,

<sup>57</sup> This, the Landlord's Tale, is the first of the *Tales of a Wayside Inn*, the framework of which is similar to that of Boccaccio's *Decameron*. The circle of story-tellers include the landlord of the inn, a student, a Sicilian, a Spanish Jew, a theologian, a poet, and a musician—identified with actual friends of Longfellow's.

On the eighteenth of April, in Seventy-five;  
Hardly a man is now alive  
Who remembers that famous day and year.

10 He said to his friend, "If the British march  
By land or sea from the town to-night,  
Hang a lantern aloft in the belfry arch  
Of the North Church tower as a signal light,—  
One, if by land, and two, if by sea; 10  
And I on the opposite shore will be,  
Ready to ride and spread the alarm  
Through every Middlesex village and farm,  
For the country folk to be up and to arm."

Then he said, "Good night!" and with muffled oar  
20 Silently rowed to the Charlestown shore,  
Just as the moon rose over the bay,  
Where swinging wide at her moorings lay  
The Somerset, British man-of-war;  
A phantom ship, with each mast and spar 20  
Across the moon like a prison bar,  
And a huge black hulk, that was magnified  
By its own reflection in the tide.

Meanwhile, his friend, through alley and street,  
Wanders and watches with eager ears,  
Till in the silence around him he hears  
30 The muster of men at the barrack door,  
The sound of arms, and the tramp of feet,  
And the measured tread of the grenadiers,  
Marching down to their boats on the shore. 30

Then he climbed the tower of the Old North  
Church,  
By the wooden stairs, with stealthy tread,  
To the belfry-chamber overhead,  
And startled the pigeons from their perch  
On the sombre rafters, that round him made  
Masses and moving shapes of shade,—  
40 By the trembling ladder, steep and tall,  
To the highest window in the wall,  
Where he paused to listen and look down  
A moment on the roofs of the town, 40  
And the moonlight flowing over all.

Beneath, in the churchyard, lay the dead,  
In their night-encampment on the hill,  
Wrapped in silence so deep and still  
That he could hear, like a sentinel's tread,  
The watchful night-wind, as it went  
Creeping along from tent to tent,

And seeming to whisper, "All is well!"  
 A moment only he feels the spell  
 Of the place and the hour, and the secret dread 50  
 Of the lonely belfry and the dead;  
 For suddenly all his thoughts are bent  
 On a shadowy something far away,  
 Where the river widens to meet the bay,—  
 A line of black that bends and floats  
 On the rising tide, like a bridge of boats.

Meanwhile, impatient to mount and ride,  
 Booted and spurred, with a heavy stride  
 On the opposite shore walked Paul Revere.  
 Now he patted his horse's side,  
 Now gazed at the landscape far and near,  
 Then, impetuous, stamped the earth,  
 And turned and tightened his saddle-girth;  
 But mostly he watched with eager search  
 The belfry-tower of the Old North Church,  
 As it rose above the graves on the hill,  
 Lonely and spectral and sombre and still.  
 And lo! as he looks, on the belfry's height  
 A glimmer, and then a gleam of light!  
 He springs to the saddle, the bridle he turns, 70  
 But lingers and gazes, till full on his sight  
 A second lamp in the belfry burns!

A hurry of hoofs in a village street,  
 A shape in the moonlight, a bulk in the dark,  
 And beneath, from the pebbles, in passing, a spark  
 Struck out by a steed flying fearless and fleet:  
 That was all! And yet, through the gloom and  
 the light,  
 The fate of a nation was riding that night;  
 And the spark struck out by that steed, in his  
 flight,  
 Kindled the land into flame with its heat. 80

He has left the village and mounted the steep,  
 And beneath him, tranquil and broad and deep,  
 Is the Mystic, meeting the ocean tides;  
 And under the alders, that skirt its edge,  
 Now soft on the sand, now loud on the ledge,  
 Is heard the tramp of his steed as he rides.

It was twelve by the village clock  
 When he crossed the bridge into Medford town.

He heard the crowing of the cock,  
 And the barking of the farmer's dog, 90  
 And felt the damp of the river fog,  
 That rises after the sun goes down.

It was one by the village clock,  
 When he galloped into Lexington.  
 He saw the gilded weathercock  
 Swim in the moonlight as he passed,  
 And the meeting-house windows, blank and bare,  
 Gaze at him with a spectral glare,  
 As if they already stood aghast  
 At the bloody work they would look upon. 100

It was two by the village clock,  
 When he came to the bridge in Concord town.  
 He heard the bleating of the flock,  
 And the twitter of birds among the trees,  
 And felt the breath of the morning breeze  
 Blowing over the meadows brown.  
 And one was safe and asleep in his bed  
 Who at the bridge would be first to fall,  
 Who that day would be lying dead,  
 Pierced by a British musket-ball. 110

You know the rest. In the books you have read,  
 How the British Regulars fired and fled,—  
 How the farmers gave them ball for ball,  
 From behind each fence and farm-yard wall,  
 Chasing the red-coats down the lane,  
 Then crossing the fields to emerge again  
 Under the trees at the turn of the road,  
 And only pausing to fire and load.

So through the night rode Paul Revere;  
 And so through the night went his cry of alarm 120  
 To every Middlesex village and farm,—  
 A cry of defiance and not of fear,  
 A voice in the darkness, a knock at the door,  
 And a word that shall echo forevermore!  
 For, borne on the night-wind of the Past,  
 Through all our history, to the last,  
 In the hour of darkness and peril and need,  
 The people will waken and listen to hear  
 The hurrying hoof-beats of that steed,  
 And the midnight message of Paul Revere. 130

*The Birds of Killingworth*<sup>58</sup>

It was the season, when through all the land  
 The merle<sup>59</sup> and mavis<sup>60</sup> build, and building  
 sing  
 Those lovely lyrics, written by His Hand,  
 Whom Saxon Cædmon<sup>61</sup> calls the Blithe-heart  
 King;

When on the boughs the purple buds expand,  
 The banners of the vanguard of the Spring,  
 And rivulets, rejoicing, rush and leap,  
 And wave their fluttering signals from the steep.

The robin and the bluebird, piping loud,  
 Filled all the blossoming orchards with their  
 glee;

The sparrows chirped as if they still were proud<sup>10</sup>  
 Their race in Holy Writ should mentioned be;<sup>62</sup>  
 And hungry crows, assembled in a crowd,  
 Clamored their piteous prayer incessantly,  
 Knowing who hears the ravens cry,<sup>63</sup> and said:  
 "Give us, O Lord, this day our daily bread!"<sup>64</sup>

Across the Sound<sup>65</sup> the birds of passage sailed,  
 Speaking some unknown language strange and  
 sweet

Of tropic isle remote, and passing hailed  
 The village with the cheers of all their fleet;<sup>20</sup>  
 Or quarreling together, laughed and railed  
 Like foreign sailors, landed in the street  
 Of seaport town, and with outlandish noise  
 Of oaths and gibberish frightening girls and boys.

Thus came the jocund Spring in Killingworth,  
 In fabulous days, some hundred years ago;  
 And thrifty farmers, as they tilled the earth,  
 Heard with alarm the cawing of the crow,  
 That mingled with the universal mirth,  
 Cassandra-like,<sup>66</sup> prognosticating woe;<sup>30</sup>

They shook their heads, and doomed with  
 dreadful words

To swift destruction the whole race of birds.

And a town-meeting was convened straightway  
 To set a price upon the guilty heads  
 Of these marauders, who, in lieu of pay,  
 Levied black-mail upon the garden beds  
 And cornfields, and beheld without dismay  
 The awful scarecrow, with his fluttering shreds;  
 The skeleton that waited at their feast,  
 Whereby their sinful pleasure was increased. 40

Then from his house, a temple painted white,  
 With fluted columns, and a roof of red,  
 The Squire came forth, august and splendid sight!  
 Slowly descending, with majestic tread,  
 Three flights of steps, nor looking left nor right,  
 Down the long street he walked, as one who said,  
 "A town that boasts inhabitants like me  
 Can have no lack of good society!"

The Parson, too, appeared, a man austere,  
 The instinct of whose nature was to kill; 50  
 The wrath of God he preached from year to year,  
 And read, with fervor, Edwards on the Will;<sup>67</sup>  
 His favorite pastime was to slay the deer  
 In Summer on some Adirondack hill;  
 E'en now, while walking down the rural lane,  
 He lopped the wayside lilies with his cane.

From the Academy, whose belfry crowned  
 The hill of Science with its vane of brass,  
 Came the Preceptor, gazing idly round,  
 Now at the clouds, and now at the green grass, 60  
 And all absorbed in reveries profound  
 Of fair Almira in the upper class,  
 Who was, as in a sonnet he had said,  
 As pure as water, and as good as bread, 30

And next the Deacon issued from his door,  
 In his voluminous neck-cloth, white as snow;  
 A suit of sable bombazine<sup>68</sup> he wore;  
 His form was ponderous, and his step was slow;  
 There never was so wise a man before;  
 He seemed the incarnate "Well, I told you so!" 70

<sup>58</sup> "The Birds of Killingworth" is the poet's contribution to the *Tales of a Wayside Inn*, and the sixth tale related.

<sup>59</sup> The European blackbird.

<sup>60</sup> Thrush.

<sup>61</sup> Cædmon was an Anglo-Saxon poet of the seventh century.

<sup>62</sup> Sparrows are mentioned in Matthew 10:29.

<sup>63</sup> See Psalm 147:9.

<sup>64</sup> See Matthew 6:11.

<sup>65</sup> Presumably Long Island Sound.

<sup>66</sup> Daughter of Priam and Hecuba. She was endowed with the gift of prophecy but was destined to have her prophecies go unheeded.

<sup>67</sup> Jonathan Edwards.

<sup>68</sup> A twilled fabric.

And to perpetuate his great renown  
There was a street named after him in town.

These came together in the new town-hall,  
With sundry farmers from the region round.  
The Squire presided, dignified and tall,  
His air impressive and his reasoning sound;  
Ill fared it with the birds, both great and small;  
Hardly a friend in all that crowd they found,  
But enemies enough, who every one  
Charged them with all the crimes beneath  
the sun.

80

When they had ended, from his place apart  
Rose the Preceptor, to redress the wrong,  
And, trembling like a steed before the start,  
Looked round bewildered on the expectant  
throng;  
Then thought of fair Almira, and took heart  
To speak out what was in him, clear and strong,  
Alike regardless of their smile or frown,  
And quite determined not to be laughed down.

"Plato, anticipating the Reviewers,  
From his Republic banished without pity 90  
The Poets;<sup>69</sup> in this little town of yours,  
You put to death, by means of a Committee,  
The ballad-singers and the Troubadours,  
The street-musicians of the heavenly city,  
The birds, who make sweet music for us all  
In our dark hours, as David did for Saul.<sup>70</sup>

"The thrush that carols at the dawn of day  
From the green steeples of the piny wood;  
The oriole in the elm; the noisy jay,  
Jargoning like a foreigner at his food; 100  
The bluebird balanced on some topmost spray,  
Flooding with melody the neighborhood;  
Linnet and meadow-lark, and all the throng  
That dwell in nests, and have the gift of song.

"You slay them all! and wherefore? for the gain  
Of a scant handful more or less of wheat,  
Or rye, or barley, or some other grain,  
Scratched up at random by industrious feet,  
Searching for worm or weevil after rain!  
Or a few cherries, that are not so sweet 110  
As are the songs these uninvited guests  
Sing at their feast with comfortable breasts.

<sup>69</sup> In his *Republic*, Plato said he would allow no poets in his ideal state—none except religious and martial poets.

<sup>70</sup> See I Samuel 16:14-23.

"Do you ne'er think what wondrous beings these?  
Do you ne'er think who made them and who  
taught

The dialect they speak, where melodies  
Alone are the interpreters of thought?  
Whose household words are songs in many keys,  
Sweeter than instrument of man e'er caught!  
Whose habitations in the tree-tops even  
Are half-way houses on the road to heaven! 120

"Think, every morning when the sun peeps  
through  
The dim, leaf-latticed windows of the grove,  
How jubilant the happy birds renew  
Their old, melodious madrigals of love! <sup>71</sup>  
And when you think of this, remember too  
'T is always morning somewhere, and above  
The awakening continents, from shore to shore,  
Somewhere the birds are singing evermore.

"Think of your woods and orchards without birds!  
Of empty nests that cling to boughs and  
beams 130  
As in an idiot's brain remembered words  
Hang empty 'mid the cobwebs of his dreams!  
Will bleat of flocks or bellowing of herds  
Make up for the lost music, when your teams  
Drag home the stingy harvest, and no more  
The feathered gleaners follow to your door?

"What! would you rather see the incessant stir  
Of insects in the windrows of the hay,  
And hear the locust and the grasshopper  
Their melancholy hurdy-gurdies play? 140  
Is this more pleasant to you than the whirl  
Of meadow-lark, and her sweet roundelay,<sup>72</sup>  
Or twitter of little field-fares,<sup>73</sup> as you take  
Your nooning in the shade of bush and brake?

"You call them thieves and pillagers; but know,  
They are the winged wardens of your farms,  
Who from the cornfields drive the insidious foc,  
And from your harvests keep a hundred harms;  
Even the blackest of them all, the crow,  
Renders good service as your man-at-arms, 150  
Crushing the beetle in his coat of mail,  
And crying havoc on the slug and snail.

<sup>71</sup> Songs of love.

<sup>72</sup> Song abounding in repetition.

<sup>73</sup> The European thrush.

"How can I teach your children gentleness  
And mercy to the weak, and reverence  
For Life, which, in its weakness or excess,  
Is still a gleam of God's omnipotence,  
Or Death, which, seeming darkness, is no less  
The selfsame light, although averted hence,  
When by your laws, your actions, and your speech,  
You contradict the very things I teach?" 160

With this he closed; and through the audience  
went

A murmur, like the rustle of dead leaves;  
The farmers laughed and nodded, and some bent  
Their yellow heads together like their sheaves;  
Men have no faith in fine-spun sentiment  
Who put their trust in bullocks and in bees.  
The birds were doomed; and, as the record shows,  
A bounty offered for the heads of crows.

There was another audience out of reach,  
Who had no voice nor vote in making laws, 170  
But in the papers read his little speech.

And crowned his modest temples with applause;  
They made him conscious, each one more than  
each,

He still was victor, vanquished in their cause.  
Sweetest of all the applause he won from thee,  
O fair Almira at the Academy!

And so the dreadful massacre began;

O'er fields and orchards, and o'er woodland  
crests,

The ceaseless fusillade of terror ran.

Dead fell the birds, with blood-stains on their  
breasts, 180

Or wounded crept away from sight of man,

While the young died of famine in their nests;  
A slaughter to be told in groans, not words,  
The very St. Bartholomew<sup>74</sup> of Birds!

The Summer came, and all the birds were dead;

The days were like hot coals; the very ground  
Was burned to ashes; in the orchards fed

Myriads of caterpillars, and around  
The cultivated fields and garden beds

Hosts of devouring insects crawled, and found 190  
No foe to check their march, till they had made  
The land a desert without leaf or shade.<sup>75</sup>

Devoured by worms, like Herod,<sup>76</sup> was the town,  
Because, like Herod, it had ruthlessly  
Slaughtered the Innocents. From the trees spun  
down

The canker-worms upon the passers-by,  
Upon each woman's bonnet, shawl, and gown,  
Who shook them off with just a little cry;  
They were the terror of each favorite walk,  
The endless theme of all the village talk. 200

The farmers grew impatient, but a few  
Confessed their error, and would not complain,  
For after all, the best thing one can do  
When it is raining, is to let it rain.

Then they repealed the law, although they knew  
It would not call the dead to life again;  
As school-boys, finding their mistake too late,  
Draw a wet sponge across the accusing slate.

That year in Killingworth the Autumn came  
Without the light of his majestic look. 210

The wonder of the falling tongues of flame,<sup>77</sup>  
The illumined pages of his Doom's Day Book<sup>78</sup>  
A few lost leaves blushed crimson with their  
shame,

And drowned themselves despairing in the  
brook,

While the wild wind went moaning everywhere,  
Lamenting the dead children of the air!

But the next Spring a stranger sight was seen,

A sight that never yet by bard was sung,  
As great a wonder as it would have been  
If some dumb animal had found a tongue! 220  
A wagon, overarched with evergreen,

Upon whose boughs were wicker cages hung,  
All full of singing birds, came down the street,  
Filling the air with music wild and sweet.

From all the country round these birds were  
brought,

By order of the town, with anxious quest,  
And, loosened from their wicker prisons, sought  
In woods and fields the places they loved best,  
Singing loud canticles,<sup>79</sup> which many thought  
Were satires to the authorities addressed, 230

<sup>76</sup> See Matthew 2:16.

<sup>77</sup> See Acts 2:3.

<sup>78</sup> An "inventory" of England made by the order of William the Conqueror; called the *Domesday Book* because, like that of the Last Judgment, it was so thorough as to leave out no one.

<sup>79</sup> Chants.

<sup>74</sup> On St. Bartholomew's Eve (August 23) in 1572 a great number of French Huguenots were massacred.

<sup>75</sup> See Acts 12:23.

While others, listening in green lanes, averred  
Such lovely music never had been heard!

But blither still and louder carolled they  
Upon the morrow, for they seemed to know  
It was the fair Almira's wedding-day,

And everywhere, around, above, below,  
When the Preceptor bore his bride away,  
Their songs burst forth in joyous overflow,  
And a new heaven bent over a new earth  
Amid the sunny farms of Killingworth.

240

1863

*Hawthorne*<sup>80</sup>

MAY 23, 1864

How beautiful it was, that one bright day  
In the long week of rain!  
Though all its splendor could not chase away  
The omnipresent pain.

The lovely town was white with apple-blooms,  
And the great elms o'erhead  
Dark shadows wove on their aerial looms  
Shot through with golden thread.

Across the meadows, by the gray old manse,  
The historic river flowed:  
I was as one who wanders in a trance,  
Unconscious of his road.

The faces of familiar friends seemed strange;  
Their voices I could hear,  
And yet the words they uttered seemed to change  
Their meaning to my ear.

For the one face I looked for was not there,  
The one low voice was mute;  
Only an unseen presence filled the air,  
And baffled my pursuit.

Now I look back, and meadow, manse, and  
stream

Dimly my thought defines;  
I only see—a dream within a dream—  
The hill-top hearsed with pines.

I only hear above his place of rest  
Their tender undertone,  
The infinite longings of a troubled breast,  
The voice so like his own.

There in seclusion and remote from men  
The wizard hand lies cold,

30

<sup>80</sup> This poem, occasioned by the burial of Hawthorne, should be compared with Emerson's account. Emerson and Longfellow were both pallbearers.

Which at its topmost speed let fall the pen,  
And left the tale half told.

Ah! who shall lift that wand of magic power,  
And the lost clew regain?  
The unfinished window in Aladdin's tower  
Unfinished must remain!

1864

1867

*Divina Commedia*<sup>81</sup>

I

Oft have I seen at some cathedral door  
A laborer, pausing in the dust and heat,  
Lay down his burden, and with reverent feet  
Enter, and cross himself, and on the floor  
Kneel to repeat his paternoster<sup>82</sup> o'er;  
Far off the noises of the world retreat;  
The loud vociferations of the street  
Become an undistinguishable roar.  
So, as I enter here from day to day,  
And leave my burden at this minster gate,<sup>83</sup> 10  
Kneeling in prayer, and not ashamed to pray,  
The tumult of the time disconsolate<sup>84</sup>  
20 To inarticulate murmurs dies away,  
While the eternal ages watch and wait.

II

How strange the sculptures that adorn these  
towers!  
This crowd of statues, in whose folded sleeves

<sup>81</sup> If Longfellow had written no more sonnets, these six would mark him as a distinguished sonneteer. Composed during the years while Longfellow was engaged on his translation of Dante's *Divine Comedy* and expressive of his reverent approach to that great Christian poem, the sonnets were used as prefaces to the three parts of the poem: sonnets one and two were printed at the head of the *Inferno*, the third and fourth introduced the *Purgatorio*, and the fifth and sixth prefaced the *Paradiso*.

<sup>82</sup> Literally, "Our Father."

<sup>83</sup> Cathedral gate or door.

<sup>84</sup> Tumults of the Civil War period.

Birds build their nests; while canopied with  
leaves  
Parvis<sup>85</sup> and portal bloom like trellised bowers,  
And the vast minster seems a cross of flowers!  
But fiends and dragons on the gargoyled eaves  
Watch the dead Christ between the living  
thieves,  
And, underneath, the traitor Judas lowers!  
Ah! from what agonies of heart and brain,  
What exultations trampling on despair,  
What tenderness, what tears, what hate of  
wrong,  
What passionate outcry of a soul in pain,  
Uprose this poem of the earth and air,  
This mediæval miracle of song!

## III

I enter, and I see thee in the gloom  
Of the long aisles, O poet saturnine!<sup>86</sup>  
And strive to make my steps keep pace with  
thine.  
The air is filled with some unknown perfume;  
The congregation of the dead make room  
For thee to pass; the votive tapers shine;  
Like rooks that haunt Ravenna's<sup>87</sup> groves of  
pine  
The hovering echoes fly from tomb to tomb.  
From the confessionals I hear arise  
Rehearsals of forgotten tragedies,  
And lamentations from the crypts below;  
And then a voice celestial, that begins  
With the pathetic words, "Although your sins  
As scarlet be,"<sup>88</sup> and ends with "as the snow."

## IV

With snow-white veil and garments as of flame,  
She<sup>89</sup> stands before thee, who so long ago  
Filled thy young heart with passion and the  
woe  
From which thy song and all its splendors  
came;  
And while with stern rebuke she speaks thy  
name,  
The ice about thy heart melts as the snow

<sup>85</sup> Porch.<sup>86</sup> Dante, so-called because of his gravity.<sup>87</sup> Dante's burial place.<sup>88</sup> See *Purgatorio*, xxxi, 98.<sup>89</sup> That is, Dante's Beatrice.

On mountain heights, and in swift overflow  
Comes gushing from thy lips in sobs of shame.  
Thou makest full confession; and a gleam,  
As of the dawn on some dark forest cast,  
Seems on thy lifted forehead to increase;  
Lethe and Eunoë<sup>90</sup>—the remembered dream  
And the forgotten sorrow—bring at last  
That perfect pardon which is perfect peace.

## V

I lift mine eyes, and all the windows blaze  
With forms of saints and holy men who died,  
Here martyred and hereafter glorified;  
And the great Rose<sup>91</sup> upon its leaves displays  
Christ's Triumph, and the angelic roundelays,  
With splendor upon splendor multiplied;  
And Beatrice again at Dante's side  
No more rebukes,<sup>92</sup> but smiles her words of  
praise.  
And then the organ sounds, and unseen choirs  
Sing the old Latin hymns of peace and love,  
And benedictions of the Holy Ghost;  
And the melodious bells among the spires  
O'er all the house-tops and through heaven  
above  
Proclaim the elevation of the Host!<sup>93</sup>

## VI

O star of morning and of liberty!<sup>94</sup>  
O bringer of the light, whose splendor shines  
Above the darkness of the Apennines,  
Forerunner of the day that is to be!  
The voices of the city and the sea,  
The voices of the mountains and the pines,  
Repeat thy song, till the familiar lines  
Are footpaths for the thought of Italy!  
Thy fame is blown abroad from all the heights,  
Through all the nations, and a sound is heard,  
As of a mighty wind, and men devout,

<sup>90</sup> Dante drinks of Lethe, the river of forgetfulness at the top of the Mountain of Purgatory, and of Eunoë, the river of the memory of good.<sup>91</sup> In *Paradiso*, xxxi, Dante sees the Trinity and the blessed in the symbol of a rose, the blessed being seated in order in the petals of the rose.<sup>92</sup> When Beatrice first met Dante (*Purgatorio*, xxx), she reproved him for following false pleasures, but now (*Paradiso*, xxx) she gives him comforting words.<sup>93</sup> The supreme moment in the Mass, when the consecrated elements are lifted up before the communicants.<sup>94</sup> Dante, the star announcing a rebirth of the Italian spirit and foretelling Italian freedom.

Strangers of Rome, and the new proselytes,  
 In their own language hear thy wondrous word,  
 And many are amazed and many doubt.

1864-1866

### *The Broken Oar*<sup>95</sup>

Once upon Iceland's solitary strand  
 A poet wandered with his book and pen,  
 Seeking some final word, some sweet Amen,  
 Wherewith to close the volume in his hand.  
 The billows rolled and plunged upon the sand,  
 The circling sea-gulls swept beyond his ken,  
 And from the parting cloud-rack now and then  
 Flashed the red sunset over sea and land.  
 Then by the billows at his feet was tossed  
 A broken oar; and carved thereon he read: 10  
 "Oft was I weary, when I toiled at thee;"  
 And like a man, who findeth what was lost,  
 He wrote the words, then lifted up his head,  
 And flung his useless pen into the sea.

### *Killed at the Ford*<sup>96</sup>

He is dead, the beautiful youth,  
 The heart of honor, the tongue of truth,  
 He, the life and light of us all,  
 Whose voice was blithe as a bugle-call,  
 Whom all eyes followed with one consent,  
 The cheer of whose laugh, and whose pleasant  
 word,  
 Hushed all murmurs of discontent.

Only last night, as we rode along,  
 Down the dark of the mountain gap,  
 To visit the picket-guard at the ford, 10  
 Little dreaming of any mishap,  
 He was humming the words of some old song:

<sup>95</sup> Written in 1864 (?), published in the *Keramos* volume (1878). The poem owed its inspiration to Longfellow's sentiment recorded in his diary for November 13, 1864: "I am frequently tempted to write upon my work the inscription found upon an oar cast on the coast of Iceland . . . 'Oft was I weary when I tugged at thee.'"

<sup>96</sup> The poem is notable for its quiet, self-controlled expression of poignant emotion. Although the verses doubtless had their inspiration in the poet's thoughts and experiences during a trip to Washington where he went to see his son, "Charles, (a lieutenant in the Army of the Potomac) who was severely, but not fatally, wounded, Longfellow said that the poem does not refer to any particular event or person.

"Two red roses he had on his cap,  
 And another he bore at the point of his sword."

Sudden and swift a whistling ball  
 Came out of a wood, and the voice was still;  
 Something I heard in the darkness fall,  
 And for a moment my blood grew chill;  
 I spake in a whisper, as he who speaks 20  
 In a room where some one is lying dead;  
 But he made no answer to what I said.

We lifted him up to his saddle again,  
 And through the mire and the mist and the rain  
 Carried him back to the silent camp,  
 And laid him as if asleep on his bed;  
 And I saw by the light of the surgeon's lamp  
 Two white roses upon his cheeks,  
 And one, just over his heart, blood-red!

And I saw in a vision how far and fleet  
 That fatal bullet went speeding forth, 30  
 Till it reached a town in the distant North,  
 Till it reached a house in a sunny street,  
 Till it reached a heart that ceased to beat  
 Without a murmur, without a cry;  
 And a bell was tolled, in that far-off town,  
 For one who had passed from cross to crown,  
 And the neighbors wondered that she should die.  
 1866

### *Chaucer*

An old man in a lodge within a park;  
 The chamber walls depicted all around  
 With portraitures of huntsman, hawk, and  
 hound,  
 And the hurt deer. He listeneth to the lark,  
 Whose song comes with the sunshine through  
 the dark  
 Of painted glass in leaden lattice bound;  
 He listeneth and he laugheth at the sound,  
 Then writeth in a book like any clerk.  
 He is the poet of the dawn, who wrote  
 The Canterbury Tales, and his old age 10  
 Made beautiful with song; and as I read  
 I hear the crowing cock, I hear the note  
 Of lark and linnet, and from every page  
 Rise odors of ploughed field or flowery mead.

1873

1875



*Shakespeare*

A vision as of crowded city streets,  
 With human life in endless overflow;  
 Thunder of thoroughfares; trumpets that blow  
 To battle; clamor, in obscure retreats,  
 Of sailors landed from their anchored fleets;  
 Tolling of bells in turrets, and below  
 Voices of children, and bright flowers that  
 throw

O'er garden-walls their intermingled sweets!  
 This vision comes to me when I unfold  
 The volume of the Poet paramount,  
 Whom all the Muses loved, not one alone;—  
 Into his hands they put the lyre of gold,  
 And, crowned with sacred laurel at their fount,  
 Placed him as Musagetes<sup>97</sup> on their throne.  
 1873 1875

*Milton*

I pace the sounding sea-beach and behold  
 How the voluminous billows roll and run,  
 Upheaving and subsiding, while the sun  
 Shines through their sheeted emerald far  
 unrolled,  
 And the ninth wave, slow gathering fold by fold  
 All its loose-flowing garments into one,  
 Plunges upon the shore, and floods the dun  
 Pale reach of sands, and changes them to gold.  
 So in majestic cadence rise and fall  
 The mighty undulations of thy song,  
 O sightless bard, England's Mæonides!<sup>98</sup>  
 And ever and anon, high over all  
 Uplifted, a ninth wave superb and strong,  
 Floods all the soul with its melodious seas.  
 1873 1875

*Keats*

The young Endymion sleeps Endymion's<sup>99</sup> sleep;  
 The shepherd-boy whose tale was left half told!  
 The solemn grove uplifts its shield of gold  
 To the red rising moon, and loud and deep  
 The nightingale is singing from the steep;

<sup>97</sup> Apollo.<sup>98</sup> Homer.<sup>99</sup> See Keats's poem *Endymion*.

It is midsummer, but the air is cold;  
 Can it be death? Alas, beside the fold  
 A shepherd's pipe lies shattered near his sheep.  
 Lo! in the moonlight gleams a marble white,  
 On which I read: "Here lieth one whose name 10  
 Was writ in water."<sup>100</sup> And was this the meed  
 Of his sweet singing? Rather let me write:  
 "The smoking flax before it burst to flame  
 Was quenched by death, and broken the  
 bruised reed."

1873

1875

*Charles Sumner*

Garlands upon his grave,  
 And flowers upon his hearse,  
 And to the tender heart and brave  
 The tribute of this verse.

His was the troubled life,  
 The conflict and the pain,  
 The grief, the bitterness of strife,  
 The honor without stain.

Like Winkelried,<sup>101</sup> he took  
 Into his manly breast  
 The sheaf of hostile spears, and broke  
 A path for the oppressed.

10

Then from the fatal field  
 Upon a nation's heart  
 Borne like a warrior on his shield!—  
 So shall the brave depart.

Death takes us by surprise,  
 And stays our hurrying feet;  
 The great design unfinished lies,  
 Our lives are incomplete.

20

But in the dark unknown  
 Perfect their circles seem,  
 Even as a bridge's arch of stone  
 Is rounded in the stream.

<sup>100</sup> The epitaph on Keats' tombstone, chosen by Keats himself.  
<sup>101</sup> A Swiss hero whose self-sacrifice assured a Swiss victory  
 over the forces of Leopold of Austria on July 9, 1386. Sumner  
 was the spearhead of the attack in the United States Senate  
 against slavery, in consequence of which he suffered, on May 22,  
 1856, a severe physical assault from Preston A. Brooks, a relative  
 of Senator Butler of South Carolina, whose views Sumner had  
 attacked two days earlier.

Alike are life and death,  
 When life in death survives,  
 And the uninterrupted breath  
 Inspires a thousand lives.  
 When a star quenched on high,  
 For ages would its light,

Still travelling downward from the sky,  
 Shine on our mortal sight.  
 So when a great man dies,  
 For years beyond our ken,  
 The light he leaves behind him lies  
 Upon the paths of men.

30

1874

1875

### *Morituri Salutamus*<sup>102</sup>

POEM FOR THE FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY  
 OF THE CLASS OF 1825 IN BOWDOIN COLLEGE

Tempora labuntur, tacitisque senescimus annis,  
 Et fugiunt freno non remorante dies.  
 OVID, *Fastorum*, lib. vi.<sup>103</sup>

"O Cæsar, we who are about to die  
 Salute you!" was the gladiators' cry  
 In the arena, standing face to face  
 With death and with the Roman populace.

O ye familiar scenes,—ye groves of pine,  
 That once were mine and are no longer mine,—  
 Thou river, widening through the meadows green  
 To the vast sea, so near and yet unseen,—  
 Ye halls, in whose seclusion and repose  
 Phantoms of fame, like exhalations, rose  
 And vanished,—we who are about to die  
 Salute you; earth and air and sea and sky,  
 And the Imperial Sun that scatters down  
 His sovereign splendors upon grove and town.

10

Ye do not answer us! ye do not hear!  
 We are forgotten; and in your austere  
 And calm indifference, ye little care  
 Whether we come or go, or whence or where.  
 What passing generations fill these halls,  
 What passing voices echo from these walls,  
 Ye heed not; we are only as the blast,  
 A moment heard, and then forever past.

20

Not so the teachers who in earlier days  
 Led our bewildered feet through learning's maze;  
 They answer us—alas! what have I said?  
 What greetings come there from the voiceless  
 dead?

What salutation, welcome, or reply?  
 What pressure from the hands that lifeless lie?  
 They are not longer here; they all are gone  
 Into the land of shadows,—all save one.<sup>104</sup>  
 Honor and reverence, and the good repute  
 That follows faithful service as its fruit,  
 Be unto him, whom living we salute.

30

The great Italian poet,<sup>105</sup> when he made  
 His dreadful journey to the realms of shade,  
 Met there the old instructor of his youth,  
 And cried in tones of pity and of ruth:  
 "Oh, never from the memory of my heart  
 Your dear, paternal image shall depart,  
 Who while on earth, ere yet by death surprised,  
 Taught me how mortals are immortalized;  
 How grateful am I for that patient care  
 All my life long my language shall declare."

40

To-day we make the poet's words our own,  
 And utter them in plaintive undertone;  
 Nor to the living only be they said,

<sup>102</sup> The title means "We who are about to die salute you," the legendary cry of the gladiators to the Roman Emperor on entering the arena. The central idea of the poem seems to have come to Longfellow on viewing a painting by Gerome of gladiators in the Roman arena. Into this poem, says Professor Howard M. Jones, Longfellow has put "such wisdom as had come to him in some seventy years of life. . . . It is a simple, unpretentious piece, written for once in rhymed pentameter; into it he introduces the inevitable literary allusion without which, for him, no poem was quite complete—this time, a long story from the *Gesta Romanorum*. . . . This [poem] is surely no unworthy rival of 'Ulysses' and 'Rabbi Ben Ezra'; here is surely the

philosophic temper for which, in some sense, poetry exists; and this ripe and Senecan wisdom, these easy and colloquial lines, apparently so effortless but withal so cunning—all this, I say, is the utterance of that riper Longfellow who has been so curiously ignored."—*American Writers on American Literature* (ed. by John Macy, New York, 1931), 122–24.

<sup>103</sup> "Time passes by, we grow old with the passing years, and the days race by unchecked."

<sup>104</sup> Alpheus Spring Packard (1798–1884), professor at Bowdoin from 1824 to his death.

<sup>105</sup> In the *Inferno*, xv, 82–87, Dante pictures himself as meeting Brunetto Latini and speaking to him as in lines 38–43.

But to the other living called the dead,  
Whose dear, paternal images appear  
Not wrapped in gloom, but robed in sunshine  
here;

Whose simple lives, complete and without flaw, 50  
Were part and parcel of great Nature's law;  
Who said not to their Lord, as if afraid,  
"Here is thy talent in a napkin laid," <sup>106</sup>  
But labored in their sphere, as men who live  
In the delight that work alone can give.  
Peace be to them; eternal peace and rest,  
And the fulfilment of the great behest:  
"Ye have been faithful over a few things,  
Over ten cities shall ye reign as kings." <sup>107</sup>

And ye who fill the places we once filled, 60  
And follow in the furrows that we tilled,  
Young men, whose generous hearts are beating  
high,  
We who are old, and are about to die,  
Salute you; hail you; take your hands in ours,  
And crown you with our welcome as with flowers!

How beautiful is youth! how bright it gleams  
With its illusions, aspirations, dreams!  
Book of Beginnings, Story without End,  
Each maid a heroine, and each man a friend!  
Aladdin's Lamp, and Fortunatus' Purse, 70  
That holds the treasures of the universe!  
All possibilities are in its hands,  
No danger daunts it, and no foe withstands;  
In its sublime audacity of faith,  
"Be thou removed!" it to the mountain saith,  
And with ambitious feet, secure and proud,  
Ascends the ladder leaning on the cloud!

As ancient Priam <sup>108</sup> at the Scæan gate  
Sat on the walls of Troy in regal state  
With the old men, too old and weak to fight, 80  
Chirping like grasshoppers in their delight  
To see the embattled hosts, with spear and shield,  
Of Trojans and Achæans in the field;  
So from the snowy summits of our years  
We see you in the plain, as each appears,  
And question of you; asking, "Who is he  
That towers above the others? Which may be  
Atreides, Menelaus, Odysseus,  
Ajax the great, or bold Idomeneus?"

<sup>106</sup> See Matthew 25:14-30.

<sup>107</sup> Luke 19:17.

<sup>108</sup> See the *Iliad*, iii, 199.

Let him not boast who puts his armor on 90  
As he who puts it off, the battle done.<sup>109</sup>  
Study yourselves; and most of all note well  
Wherein kind Nature meant you to excel.  
Not every blossom ripens into fruit;  
Minerva, the inventress of the flute,  
Flung it aside, when she her face surveyed  
Distorted in a fountain as she played;  
The unlucky Marsyas <sup>110</sup> found it, and his fate  
Was one to make the bravest hesitate.

Write on your doors the saying wise and old, 100  
"Be bold! be bold!" and everywhere, "Be bold;  
Be not too bold!" <sup>111</sup> Yet better the excess  
Than the defect; better the more than less;  
Better like Hector <sup>112</sup> in the field to die,  
Than like a perfumed Paris turn and fly.<sup>113</sup>

And now, my classmates; ye remaining few  
That number not the half of those we knew,  
Ye, against whose familiar names not yet  
The fatal asterisk <sup>114</sup> of death is set,  
Ye I salute! The horologe of Time 110  
Strikes the half-century with a solemn chime,  
And summons us together once again,  
The joy of meeting not unmixed with pain.

Where are the others? Voices from the deep  
Caverns of darkness answer me: "They sleep!"  
I name no names; instinctively I feel  
Each at some well-remembered grave will kneel,  
And from the inscription wipe the weeds and 70  
moss,  
For every heart best knoweth its own loss.  
I see their scattered gravestones gleaming white 120  
Through the pale dusk of the impending night;  
O'er all alike the impartial sunset throws  
Its golden lilies mingled with the rose;  
We give to each a tender thought, and pass  
Out of the graveyards with their tangled grass,  
Unto these scenes frequented by our feet  
When we were young, and life was fresh and  
sweet.

<sup>109</sup> From I Kings 20:11.

<sup>110</sup> A Greek poet who challenged Zeus to a musical contest, lost, and was flayed alive for his presumptuous conduct.

<sup>111</sup> This saying has many variants. Longfellow probably had in mind Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, III, xi, 54.

<sup>112</sup> Hector, a Greek hero in the *Iliad*, bravely met death at the hands of Achilles.

<sup>113</sup> See the *Iliad*, iii and xxii.

<sup>114</sup> The custom of placing an asterisk beside the names of members of a college class who have died.

What shall I say to you? What can I say  
 Better than silence is? When I survey  
 This throng of faces turned to meet my own, 130  
 Friendly and fair, and yet to me unknown,  
 Transformed the very landscape seems to be;  
 It is the same, yet not the same to me.  
 So many memories crowd upon my brain,  
 So many ghosts are in the wooded plain,  
 I fain would steal away, with noiseless tread,  
 As from a house where some one lieth dead.  
 I cannot go;—I pause;—I hesitate;  
 My feet reluctant linger at the gate;  
 As one who struggles in a troubled dream 140  
 To speak and cannot, to myself I seem.

Vanish the dream! Vanish the idle fears!  
 Vanish the rolling mists of fifty years!  
 Whatever time or space may intervene,  
 I will not be a stranger in this scene.  
 Here every doubt, all indecision, ends;  
 Hail, my companions, comrades, classmates,  
 friends!

Ah me! the fifty years since last we met  
 Seem to me fifty folios bound and set  
 By Time, the great transcriber, on his shelves, 150  
 Wherein are written the histories of ourselves.  
 What tragedies, what comedies, are there;  
 What joy and grief, what rapture and despair!  
 What chronicles of triumph and defeat,  
 Of struggle, and temptation, and retreat!  
 What records of regrets, and doubts, and fears!  
 What pages blotted, blistered by our tears!  
 What lovely landscapes on the margin shine,  
 What sweet, angelic faces, what divine  
 And holy images of love and trust, 160  
 Undimmed by age, unsoiled by damp or dust!

Whose hand shall dare to open and explore  
 These volumes, closed and clasped forevermore?  
 Not mine. With reverential feet I pass;  
 I hear a voice that cries, "Alas! alas!  
 Whatever hath been written shall remain,  
 Nor be erased nor written o'er again;  
 The unwritten only still belongs to thee:  
 Take heed, and ponder well what that shall be."

As children frightened by a thunder-cloud 170  
 Are reassured if some one reads aloud  
 A tale of wonder, with enchantment fraught,  
 Or wild adventure, that diverts their thought,

Let me endeavor with a tale <sup>115</sup> to chase  
 The gathering shadows of the time and place,  
 And banish what we all too deeply feel  
 Wholly to say, or wholly to conceal.

In mediæval Rome, I know not where,  
 There stood an image with its arm in air,  
 And on its lifted finger, shining clear, 180  
 A golden ring with the device, "Strike here!"  
 Greatly the people wondered, though none  
 guessed

The meaning that these words but half expressed,  
 Until a learned clerk, who at noonday  
 With downcast eyes was passing on his way,  
 Paused, and observed the spot, and marked it  
 well,

Whereon the shadow of the finger fell;  
 And, coming back at midnight, delved, and  
 found

A secret stairway leading underground.  
 Down this he passed into a spacious hall, 190  
 Lit by a flaming jewel on the wall;  
 And opposite, in threatening attitude,  
 With bow and shaft a brazen statue stood.  
 Upon its forehead, like a coronet,  
 Were these mysterious words of menace set:  
 "That which I am, I am; my fatal aim  
 None can escape, not even yon luminous flame!"

Midway the hall was a fair table placed,  
 With cloth of gold, and golden cups enchased  
 With rubies, and the plates and knives were  
 gold, 200

And gold the bread and viands manifold.  
 Around it, silent, motionless, and sad,  
 Were seated gallant knights in armor clad,  
 And ladies beautiful with plume and zone,  
 But they were stone, their hearts within were  
 stone;

And the vast hall was filled in every part  
 With silent crowds, stony in face and heart.

Long at the scene, bewildered and amazed,  
 The trembling clerk in speechless wonder gazed;  
 Then from the table, by his greed made bold, 210  
 He seized a goblet and a knife of gold,  
 And suddenly from their seats the guests  
 upsprang,

The vaulted ceiling with loud clamors rang,

<sup>115</sup> The tale which follows is the 108th tale in the *Gesta Romanorum*.

The archer sped his arrow, at their call,  
Shattering the lambent jewel on the wall,  
And all was dark around and overhead;—  
Stark on the floor the luckless clerk lay dead!

The writer of this legend then records  
Its ghostly <sup>116</sup> application in these words:  
The image is the Adversary old, 220  
Whose beckoning finger points to realms of gold;  
Our lusts and passions are the downward stair  
That leads the soul from a diviner air;  
The archer, Death; the flaming jewel, Life;  
Terrestrial goods, the goblet and the knife;  
The knights and ladies, all whose flesh and bone  
By avarice have been hardened into stone;  
The clerk, the scholar whom the love of self  
Tempted from his books and from his nobler self.

The scholar and the world! The endless strife, 230  
The discord in the harmonies of life!  
The love of learning, the sequestered nooks,  
And all the sweet serenity of books;  
The market-place, the eager love of gain,  
Whose aim is vanity, and whose end is pain!

But why, you ask me, should this tale be told  
To men grown old, or who are growing old?  
It is too late! Ah, nothing is too late  
Till the tired heart shall cease to palpitate.  
Cato <sup>117</sup> learned Greek at eighty; Sophocles <sup>118</sup> 240  
Wrote his grand *Œdipus*, and Simonides <sup>119</sup>  
Bore off the prize of verse from his compeers,  
When each had numbered more than fourscore  
years,

And Theophrastus, <sup>120</sup> at fourscore and ten,  
Had but begun his *Characters of Men*.  
Chaucer, at Woodstock with the nightingales,  
At sixty <sup>121</sup> wrote the *Canterbury Tales*;

<sup>116</sup> That is, spiritual.

<sup>117</sup> Cato the Censor (234–149 B.C.).

<sup>118</sup> Sophocles (495–405 B.C.), one of the greatest of the Greek dramatists, is said to have written the *Œdipus at Colonus* just before his death.

<sup>119</sup> Simonides (556–467 B.C.), one of the great Greek lyric poets.

<sup>120</sup> Theophrastus (382–297 B.C.), author of *Moral Characters*.

<sup>121</sup> Longfellow wrote this when Chaucer was believed to have been born in 1320. Nowadays the accepted date is 1340.

Goethe <sup>122</sup> at Weimar, toiling to the last,  
Completed *Faust* when eighty years were past.  
These are indeed exceptions; but they show 250  
How far the gulf-stream of our youth may flow  
Into the arctic regions of our lives,  
Where little else than life itself survives.

As the barometer foretells the storm  
While still the skies are clear, the weather warm,  
So something in us, as old age draws near,  
Betrays the pressure of the atmosphere.  
The nimble mercury, ere we are aware,  
Descends the elastic ladder of the air;  
The telltale blood in artery and vein 260  
Sinks from its higher levels in the brain;  
Whatever poet, orator, or sage  
May say of it, old age is still old age.  
It is the waning, not the crescent moon;  
The dusk of evening, not the blaze of noon;  
It is not strength, but weakness; not desire,  
But its surcease; not the fierce heat of fire,  
The burning and consuming element,  
But that of ashes and of embers spent,  
In which some living sparks we still discern, 270  
Enough to warm, but not enough to burn.

What then? Shall we sit idly down and say  
The night hath come; it is no longer day?  
The night hath not yet come; we are not quite  
Cut off from labor by the failing light;  
Something remains for us to do or dare;  
Even the oldest tree some fruit may bear;  
Not *Œdipus Coloneus*, or Greek Ode,  
Or tales of pilgrims that one morning rode  
Out of the gateway of the Tabard Inn, <sup>123</sup> 280  
But other something, would we but begin;  
For age is opportunity no less  
Than youth itself, though in another dress,  
And as the evening twilight fades away  
The sky is filled with stars, invisible by day.  
1874 1875

<sup>122</sup> Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832) began *Faust I* in 1773, but the conclusion of *Faust II* was first published the year after his death.

<sup>123</sup> The inn that Chaucer's pilgrims leave.

*Three Friends of Mine*

## I

When I remember them, those friends of mine,  
 Who are no longer here, the noble three,  
 Who half my life were more than friends to  
     me,  
 And whose discourse was like a generous wine,  
 I most of all remember the divine  
 Something, that shone in them, and made us  
     see  
 The archetypal man, and what might be  
 The amplitude of Nature's first design.  
 In vain I stretch my hands to clasp their hands;  
 I cannot find them. Nothing now is left      10  
     But a majestic memory. They meanwhile  
 Wander together in Elysian lands,  
 Perchance remembering me, who am bereft  
 Of their dear presence, and, remembering,  
     smile.

## II

In Attica <sup>124</sup> thy birthplace should have been,  
 Or the Ionian Isles, or where the seas  
 Encircle in their arms the Cyclades,  
 So wholly Greek wast thou in thy serene  
 And childlike joy of life, O Philhellene!  
 Around thee would have swarmed the Attic  
     bees;  
 Homer had been thy friend, or Socrates,  
 And Plato welcomed thee to his demesne.  
 For thee old legends breathed historic breath;  
 Thou sawest Poseidon in the purple sea,      10  
     And in the sunset Jason's fleece of gold!  
 Oh, what hadst thou to do with cruel Death,  
 Who wast so full of life, or Death with thee,  
 That thou shouldst die before thou hadst  
     grown old!

## III

I stand again on the familiar shore,  
 And hear the waves of the distracted sea  
 Pitcously calling and lamenting thee, <sup>125</sup>

<sup>124</sup> Sonnet II commemorates C. C. Felton (1807-62), professor of Greek at Harvard; hence his birthplace might appropriately have been Attica.

<sup>125</sup> The third sonnet is written in memory of Jean Louis Rudolphe Agassiz (1807-73), a Swiss-born naturalist and educator, whose summer home at Nahant near Longfellow's and their professional associations in Cambridge explain the allusions in this poem.

And waiting restless at thy cottage door.  
 The rocks and sea-weed on the ocean floor,  
 The willows in the meadow, and the free  
 Wild winds of the Atlantic welcome me;  
 And why shouldst thou be dead, and come no  
     more?  
 Ah, why shouldst thou be dead, when common  
     men  
 Are busy with their trivial affairs,      10  
     Having and holding? Why, then thou hadst  
     read  
 Nature's mysterious manuscript, and then  
 Wast ready to reveal the truth it bears,  
 Why art thou silent? Why shouldst thou be  
     dead?

## IV

River that stealest with such silent pace  
 Around the City of the Dead, where lies  
 A friend who bore thy name, <sup>126</sup> and whom  
     these eyes  
 Shall see no more in his accustomed place,  
 Linger and fold him in thy soft embrace,  
 And say good night, for now the western skies  
 Are red with sunset, and gray mists arise  
 Like damps that gather on a dead man's face.  
 Good night! good night! as we so oft have said  
 Beneath this roof at midnight, in the days      10  
     That are no more, and shall no more return.  
 Thou hast but taken thy lamp and gone to bed;  
 I stay a little longer, as one stays  
 To cover up the embers that still burn.

## V

The doors are all wide open; at the gate  
 The blossomed lilacs counterfeit a blaze,  
 And seem to warm the air; a dreamy haze  
 Hangs o'er the Brighton meadows like a fate,  
 And on their margin, with sea-tides elate,  
 The flooded Charles, as in the happier days,  
 Writes the last letter of his name, and stays  
 His restless steps, as if compelled to wait.  
 I also wait; but they will come no more,  
 Those friends of mine, whose presence satisfied      10  
 The thirst and hunger of my heart. Ah me!

<sup>126</sup> The fourth sonnet deals with Longfellow's dearest friend, Charles Sumner. The river mentioned is the Charles. Sumner died in 1874 and was buried at Mount Auburn, beside the Charles River, where Agassiz, Lowell, Holmes, Prescott, Motley, Parkman, and Longfellow, too, were laid.

They have forgotten the pathway to my door!  
 Something is gone from nature since they died,  
 And summer is not summer, nor can be.

1874

1875

### *The Sound of the Sea* <sup>127</sup>

The sea awoke at midnight from its sleep,  
 And round the pebbly beaches far and wide  
 I heard the first wave of the rising tide  
 Rush onward with uninterrupted sweep;  
 A voice out of the silence deep,  
 A sound mysteriously multiplied  
 As of a cataract from the mountain's side,  
 Or roar of winds upon a wooded steep.  
 So comes to us at times, from the unknown  
 And inaccessible solitudes of being,  
 The rushing of the sea-tides of the soul;  
 And inspirations, that we deem our own,  
 Are some divine foreshadowing and foreseeing  
 Of things beyond our reason or control.

1874

1875

### *A Dutch Picture* <sup>128</sup>

Simon Danz has come home again,  
 From cruising about with his buccaneers;  
 He has singed the beard of the King of Spain,  
 And carried away the Dean of Jaen <sup>129</sup>  
 And sold him in Algiers.

In his house by the Maese, <sup>130</sup> with its roof  
 of tiles,  
 And weathercocks flying aloft in air,  
 There are silver tankards of antique styles,  
 Plunder of convent and castle, and piles  
 Of carpets rich and rare.

10

In his tulip-garden there by the town,  
 Overlooking the sluggish stream,  
 With his Moorish cap and dressing-gown,  
 The old sea-captain, hale and brown,  
 Walks in a waking dream.

A smile in his gray mustachio lurks  
 Whenever he thinks of the King of Spain,  
 And the listed tulips look like Turks,

<sup>127</sup> Characteristic of Longfellow's depth of feeling for the sea, doubtless bred by early associations in Portland, Maine.

<sup>128</sup> The incidents of this poem are presumably imaginary.

<sup>129</sup> Jaen, properly Jaén, is a city and province in Andalusia.

<sup>130</sup> The Dutch name for the Meuse River.

And the silent gardener as he works  
 Is changed to the Dean of Jaen.

20

The windmills on the outermost  
 Verge of the landscape in the haze,  
 To him are towers on the Spanish coast,  
 With whiskered sentinels at their post,  
 Though this is the river Maese.

But when the winter rains begin,  
 He sits and smokes by the blazing brands,  
 And old seafaring men come in,  
 Goat-bearded, gray, and with double chin,  
 And rings upon their hands.

30

They sit there in the shadow and shine  
 Of the flickering fire of the winter night;  
 Figures in color and design  
 Like those by Rembrandt of the Rhine, <sup>131</sup>  
 Half darkness and half light.

And they talk of ventures lost or won,  
 And their talk is ever and ever the same,  
 While they drink the red wine of Tarragon,  
 From the cellars of some Spanish Don,  
 Or convent set on flame.

40

Restless at times with heavy strides  
 He paces his parlor to and fro;  
 He is like a ship that at anchor rides,  
 And swings with the rising and falling tides,  
 And tugs at her anchor-tow.

Voices mysterious far and near,  
 Sound of the wind and sound of the sea,  
 Are calling and whispering in his ear,  
 "Simon Danz! Why stayest thou here?  
 Come forth and follow me!"

50

So he thinks he shall take to the sea again  
 For one more cruise with his buccaneers,  
 To singe the beard of the King of Spain,  
 And capture another Dean of Jaen  
 And sell him in Algiers.

1876

1876

### *Nature*

As a fond mother, when the day is o'er,  
 Leads by the hand her little child to bed,

<sup>131</sup> Rembrandt van Rijn (1606-69), the great Dutch painter, whose later paintings especially are remarkable for their use of light and shadow.

Half willing, half reluctant to be led,  
 And leave his broken playthings on the floor,  
 Still gazing at them through the open door,  
 Nor wholly reassured and comforted  
 By promises of others in their stead,  
 Which, though more splendid, may not please  
 him more;  
 So Nature deals with us, and takes away  
 Our playthings one by one, and by the hand 10  
 Leads us to rest so gently, that we go  
 Scarce knowing if we wish to go or stay,  
 Being too full of sleep to understand  
 How far the unknown transcends the what we  
 know.

1876

1877

### *In the Churchyard at Tarrytown*

Here lies the gentle humorist,<sup>132</sup> who died  
 In the bright Indian Summer of his fame!  
 A simple stone, with but a date and name,  
 Marks his secluded resting-place beside  
 The river that he loved and glorified.  
 Here in the autumn of his days he came,  
 But the dry leaves of life were all aflame  
 With tints that brightened and were multiplied.  
 How sweet a life was his; how sweet a death!  
 Living, to wing with mirth the weary hours, 10  
 Or with romantic tales the heart to cheer;  
 Dying, to leave a memory like the breath  
 Of summers full of sunshine and of showers,  
 A grief and gladness in the atmosphere.

1877

### *The Poets*

O ye dead Poets, who are living still  
 Immortal in your verse, though life be fled,  
 And ye, O living Poets, who are dead  
 Though ye are living, if neglect can kill,  
 Tell me if in the darkest hours of ill,  
 With drops of anguish falling fast and red  
 From the sharp crown of thorns upon your head  
 Ye were not glad your errand to fulfil?  
 Yes; for the gift and ministry of Song  
 Have something in them so divinely sweet, 10  
 It can assuage the bitterness of wrong;  
 Not in the clamor of the crowded street,

<sup>132</sup> Washington Irving.

Not in the shouts and plaudits of the throng,  
 But in ourselves, are triumph and defeat.  
 1876 1878

### *Victor and Vanquished*

As one who long hath fled with panting breath  
 Before his foe, bleeding and near to fall,  
 I turn and set my back against the wall,  
 And look thee in the face, triumphant Death.  
 I call for aid, and no one answereth;  
 I am alone with thee, who conquerest all;  
 Yet me thy threatening form doth not appall,  
 For thou art but a phantom and a wraith.  
 Wounded and weak, sword broken at the hilt,  
 With armor shattered, and without a shield, 10  
 I stand unmoved; do with me what thou wilt;  
 I can resist no more, but will not yield.  
 This is no tournament where cowards tilt;  
 The vanquished here is victor of the field.

1876

1882

### *The Cross of Snow*

In the long, sleepless watches of the night,  
 A gentle face—the face of one long dead—  
 Looks at me from the wall, where round its  
 head  
 The night-lamp casts a halo of pale light.  
 Here in this room she died; and soul more white  
 Never through martyrdom of fire was led  
 To its repose; nor can in books be read  
 The legend of a life more benedight.  
 There is a mountain in the distant West  
 That, sun-defying, in its deep ravines 10  
 Displays a cross of snow upon its side.  
 Such is the cross I wear upon my breast  
 These eighteen years, through all the changing  
 scenes  
 And seasons, changeless since the day she died.  
 July 10, 1879 1886

### *The Tide Rises, the Tide Falls* <sup>133</sup>

The tide rises, the tide falls,  
 The twilight darkens, the curlew calls;

<sup>133</sup> "For bare strength and stark simplicity, as well as for the suggestion of time's relentless stride, this utterance of an old man takes a high place in our literature."—Odell Shepard, *Henry Wadsworth Longfellow* (American Writers Series, New York, 1934), 362.



Along the sea-sands damp and brown  
 The traveller hastens toward the town,  
 And the tide rises, the tide falls.

And he listens, and needs must obey,  
 When the Angel says, "Write!"

1880

Darkness settles on roofs and walls,  
 But the sea, the sea in the darkness calls;  
 The little waves, with their soft, white hands,  
 Efface the footprints in the sands,  
 And the tide rises, the tide falls.

The morning breaks; the steeds in their stalls  
 Stamp and neigh, as the hostler calls;  
 The day returns, but nevermore  
 Returns the traveller to the shore,  
 And the tide rises, the tide falls.

1879

1880

### *L'Envoi*

#### THE POET AND HIS SONGS

As the birds come to the Spring,  
 We know not from where;  
 As the stars come at evening  
 From depths of the air;

As the rain comes from the cloud,  
 And the brook from the ground;  
 As suddenly, low or loud,  
 Out of silence a sound;

As the grape comes to the vine,  
 The fruit to the tree;  
 As the wind comes to the pine,  
 And the tide to the sea;

As come the white sails of ships  
 O'er the ocean's verge;  
 As comes the smile to the lips,  
 The foam to the surge;

So come to the Poet his songs,  
 All hitherward blown  
 From the misty realm, that belongs  
 To the vast Unknown.

His, and not his, are the lays  
 He sings; and their fame  
 Is his, and not his; and the praise  
 And the pride of a name.

For voices pursue him by day,  
 And haunt him by night,

### *The Bells of San Blas* <sup>134</sup>

What say the Bells of San Blas <sup>135</sup>  
 10 To the ships that southward pass  
 From the harbor of Mazatlan? <sup>136</sup>  
 To them it is nothing more  
 Than the sound of surf on the shore,—  
 Nothing more to master or man.

But to me, a dreamer of dreams,  
 To whom what is and what seems  
 Are often one and the same,—  
 The Bells of San Blas to me  
 Have a strange, wild melody,  
 And are something more than a name.

10

For bells are the voice of the church;  
 They have tones that touch and search  
 The hearts of young and old;  
 One sound to all, yet each  
 Lends a meaning to their speech,  
 And the meaning is manifold.

They are a voice of the Past,  
 Of an age that is fading fast,  
 Of a power austere and grand;  
 10 When the flag of Spain unfurled  
 Its folds o'er this western world,  
 And the Priest was lord of the land.

20

The chapel that once looked down  
 On the little seaport town  
 Has crumbled into the dust;  
 And on oaken beams below  
 The bells swing to and fro,  
 And are green with mould and rust.

30

"Is, then, the old faith dead,"  
 20 They say, "and in its stead  
 Is some new faith proclaimed,

<sup>134</sup> Longfellow's last poem, written March 12-15, 1882, suggested to him by an article in *Harper's Magazine* for March, 1882.

<sup>135</sup> San Blas is an inlet on the northern side of the Isthmus of Panama. There is a legend that the bells of a sacked convent, though thrown into the sea, still ring.

<sup>136</sup> Mazatlan is a harbor city on the southern coast of the Mexican state of Sinaloa.

That we are forced to remain  
Naked to sun and rain,  
Unsheltered and ashamed?

"Once in our tower aloof  
We rang over wall and roof  
Our warnings and our complaints;  
And round about us there  
The white doves filled the air,  
Like the white souls of the saints

"The saints! Ah, have they grown  
Forgetful of their own?  
Are they asleep, or dead,  
That open to the sky  
Their ruined Missions lie,  
No longer tenanted?

"Oh, bring us back once more  
The vanished days of yore,

When the world with faith was filled;  
Bring back the fervid zeal,  
The hearts of fire and steel,  
The hands that believe and build.

"Then from our tower again  
We will send over land and main  
Our voices of command,  
Like exiled kings who return  
To their thrones, and the people learn  
That the Priest is lord of the land!"

O Bells of San Blas, in vain  
Ye call back the Past again!  
The Past is deaf to your prayer;  
Out of the shadows of night  
The world rolls into light;  
It is daybreak everywhere.

50 1882

1882

FROM

*Kavanagh*[On a National Literature] <sup>137</sup>

. . . One evening, as he was sitting down to begin, for at least the hundredth time, the great Romance,—subject of so many resolves and so much remorse, so often determined upon but never begun,—a loud knock at the street-door, which stood wide open, announced a visitor. Unluckily, the study-door was likewise open; and consequently, being in full view, he found it impossible to refuse himself; nor, in fact, would have done so, had all the doors been shut and bolted,—the art of refusing one's self being at that time but imperfectly understood in Fairmeadow. Accordingly, the visitor was shown in.

He announced himself as Mr. Hathaway. Passing through the village, he could not deny himself the pleasure of calling on Mr. Churchill, whom he knew by his writings in the periodicals, though not person-

<sup>137</sup> From Chapter XX of *Kavanagh*, Longfellow's novel of light romance and slender narrative, published in 1849. At the opening of this scene, or episode, Mr. Churchill, the village schoolmaster of Fairmeadow, is sitting in his study when the visitor, Mr. Hathaway, enters.

In reviewing Hawthorne's *Twice-Told Tales* (1837), Longfellow had avowed himself a literary nationalist. Writing in the *North American Review* for July, 1847, he concluded his praise of Hawthorne's collection of stories by saying, "One of the

ally. He wished, moreover, to secure the co-operation of one, already so favorably known to the literary world, in a new Magazine he was about to establish, in order to raise the character of American literature, which, in his opinion, the existing reviews and magazines had entirely failed to accomplish. A daily increasing want of something better was felt by the public; and the time had come for the establishment of such a periodical as he proposed. After explaining, in rather a florid and exuberant manner, his plans and prospects, he entered more at large into the subject of American literature, which it was his design to foster and patronize.

"I think, Mr. Churchill," said he, "that we want a national literature commensurate with our mountains and rivers,—commensurate with Niagara, and the Alleghanies, and the Great Lakes!"

"Oh!"

prominent characteristics of these tales is that they are national in their character. The author has wisely chosen his themes among the traditions of New England. . . . This is the right material for story."

Now, twelve years later, after repeated sojourns in Europe and long immersion in the humanistic tradition of European literatures (as his academic post at Harvard brought it to his attention), he adopted a less nationalistic, more cosmopolitan point of view, as this selection illustrates.

"We want a national epic that shall correspond to the size of the country; that shall be to all other epics what Banvard's Panorama<sup>138</sup> of the Mississippi is to all other paintings,—the largest in the world!"

"Ah!"

"We want a national drama in which scope enough shall be given to our gigantic ideas, and to the unparalleled activity and progress of our people!"

"Of course."

"In a word, we want a national literature altogether shaggy and unshorn, that shall shake the earth, like a herd of buffaloes thundering over the prairies!"

"Precisely," interrupted Mr. Churchill; "but excuse me!—are you not confounding things that have no analogy? Great has a very different meaning when applied to a river, and when applied to a literature. Large and shallow may perhaps be applied to both. Literature is rather an image of the spiritual world, than of the physical, is it not?—of the internal, rather than the external. Mountains, lakes, and rivers are, after all, only its scenery and decorations, not its substance and essence. A man will not necessarily be a great poet because he lives near a great mountain. Nor, being a poet, will he necessarily write better poems than another, because he lives nearer Niagara."

"But, Mr. Churchill, you do not certainly mean to deny the influence of scenery on the mind?"

"No, only to deny that it can create genius. At best, it can only develop it. Switzerland has produced no extraordinary poet; nor, as far as I know, have the Andes, or the Himalaya mountains, or the Mountains of the Moon in Africa."

"But, at all events," urged Mr. Hathaway, "let us have our literature national. If it is not national, it is nothing."

"On the contrary, it may be a great deal. Nationality is a good thing to a certain extent, but universality is better. All that is best in the great poets of all countries is not what is national in them, but what is universal. Their roots are in their native soil; but their branches wave in the unpatriotic air, that speaks

the same language unto all men, and their leaves shine with the illimitable light that pervades all lands. Let us throw all the windows open; let us admit the light and air on all sides; that we may look toward the four corners of the heavens, and not always in the same direction."

"But you admit nationality to be a good thing?"

"Yes, if not carried too far; still, I confess, it rather limits one's views of truth. I prefer what is natural. Mere nationality is often ridiculous. Every one smiles when he hears the Icelandic proverb, 'Iceland is the best land the sun shines upon.' Let us be natural, and we shall be national enough. Besides, our literature can be strictly national only so far as our character and modes of thought differ from those of other nations. Now, as we are very like the English,—are, in fact, English under a different sky,—I do not see how our literature can be very different from theirs. Westward from hand to hand we pass the lighted torch, but it was lighted at the old domestic fireside of England."

"Then you think our literature is never to be anything but an imitation of the English?"

"Not at all. It is not an imitation, but, as some one has said, a continuation."

"It seems to me that you take a very narrow view of the subject."

"On the contrary, a very broad one. No literature is complete until the language in which it is written is dead. We may well be proud of our task and of our position. Let us see if we can build in any way worthy of our forefathers."

"But I insist on originality."

"Yes; but without spasms and convulsions. Authors must not, like Chinese soldiers, expect to win victories by turning somersets in the air."

"Well, really, the prospect from your point of view is not very brilliant. Pray, what do you think of our national literature?"

"Simply, that a national literature is not the growth of a day. Centuries must contribute their dew and sunshine to it. Our own is growing slowly but surely, striking its roots downward and its branches upward, as is natural; and I do not wish, for the sake of what some people call originality, to invert it, and try to make it grow with its roots in the air. And as for having it so savage and wild as you want it, I have only to say, that all literature, as well as all art, is the result of culture and intellectual refinement."

<sup>138</sup> Long before the advent of moving pictures, Longfellow had been impressed by Banvard's panorama, or diorama, of the Mississippi. He saw this elaborate canvas on December 19, 1845, and found it inspirational for the writing of *Evangeline*, where he had to sketch scenes of the Mississippi territory which he had never seen. "One seems," he wrote, upon viewing the showing, "to be sailing down the great stream, and sees the boats and the sandbanks with cottonwood, and the bayous by moonlight. Three miles of canvas and a great deal of merit."

"Ah! we do not want art and refinement; we want genius,—untutored, wild, original, free."

"But, if this genius is to find any expression, it must employ art, for art is the external expression of our thoughts. Many have genius, but, wanting art, are for ever dumb. The two must go together to form the great poet, painter, or sculptor."

"In that sense, very well."

"I was about to say also that I thought our litera-

ture would finally not be wanting in a kind of universality.

"As the blood of all nations is mingling with our own, so will their thoughts and feelings finally mingle in our literature. We shall draw from the Germans, tenderness; from the Spaniards, passion; from the French, vivacity, to mingle more and more with our English solid sense. And this will give us universality, so much to be desired." . . .

## RALPH WALDO EMERSON (1803-1882)

Emerson holds a unique place in the opinion of the world as the spokesman of America, more particularly of the spirit of Americanism, compact of self-reliant individualism, enthusiastic progressivism, democratic liberalism, and practical idealism. Americanism was his natural heritage from a long line of ancestors who were not only ministers (though many of them were) but also merchants and farmers, bakers and coopers and distillers. Among them, they had shared all the experiences common to American pioneer life from early Puritan times onward; and Emerson, Boston born and bred, had every right to say that he "spoke also from Puritan experience." In times of war they had been patriots and soldiers, as, indeed, Emerson himself stood ready to become while he was still a grammar-school student of nine, when his class was called out to help throw up earthworks in Boston harbor for the defense of the city against the expected attack of the British during the War of 1812. He was nurtured by the expansive and nationalistic era that followed the second war with England, and his earlier writings, especially *The American Scholar* and *Self-Reliance*, voice the philosophy not only of individualism but of nationalism.

He watched the expansive westward movement of his country and, unlike his more provincial-minded neighbors, Hawthorne and Thoreau, he interpreted its progress hopefully. He repeatedly traveled westward on "hemisphere belting" lecture tours. While he found the exigencies of travel trying, every trip, whether to Missouri or Wisconsin or California, left him exhilarated and reconfirmed by the evidences of the "overflowing richness" of the new land, "whereby men should be great." He was less anxious that the "rapidity" of the American tempo should be "checked" than that it should be "guided" by intelligence and wisdom into its proper channels. Thus he absorbed the frontier, while seeking to evaluate its tremendous significance and uses in human and spiritual, instead of merely quantitative and material, terms.

Not that he was uncritically complimentary always. When the occasion arose, he could chide his countrymen in good round terms. He called the Fugitive Slave Law a damnable outrage, saying, "I will

not obey it, by God!" and he strongly attacked the administrators of the law as week-kneed time-servers, called the State House of Massachusetts a playhouse, and the General Court, a dishonored body. Statesmen, he said, were "befriending liberty with their voices and crushing it with their votes." In the heat of his righteous indignation at a people who permitted things to be in the saddle, riding mankind, he charged that representative government had grown misrepresentative, the Union a conspiracy, and democracy and freedom only fine names for bilge water. He castigated New England's idol, Daniel Webster, as a compromiser of principle, and he glorified John Brown, while Brown was under sentence of death, as a "new saint awaiting his martyrdom," who, "if he shall suffer, will make the gallows glorious like the cross."

But these are instances of Emerson's wrath at particular abuses of his larger trust in his American ideal. In "The Poet" he declared that he was not blind to the "barbarism and materialism of the times," but pointed out that while "Banks and tariffs, the newspaper and caucus, Methodism and Unitarianism, are dull to dull people . . . they rest on the same foundations of wonder as the town of Troy and the temple of Delphi."

Our log-rolling, our stumps and their politics, our fisheries, our Negroes and Indians, our boats and our repudiations, the wrath of rogues and the pusillanimity of honest men, the northern trade, the southern planting, the western clearing, Oregon and Texas, are yet unsung. Yet America is a poem in our eyes; its ample geography dazzles the imagination, and it will not wait long for metres.

At the age of nineteen, he wrote on the first page of his journal, "I dedicate my book to the Spirit of America," more particularly to the present and the future of America, for, as he went on to say, "the dead sleep in their moonless night; my business is with the living." To the spirit of America he dedicated his essays, poems, and lectures—rebuking his generation when they forgot their high destiny in the grit and grime of money-making and land-getting, praising them when they elevated their eyes. For he believed with all his heart, and said so a thousand times, that

spirit overlies nature, and that man has only one proper choice. No esoteric idealist, he never forgot that man must live on this earth, but he insisted on seeing the spiritual and the natural worlds in their proper relations—proper to man. "I have no hostility to Nature," he wrote, "but a child's love to it. . . . Let us speak her fair. I do not wish to fling stones at my beautiful mother, nor soil my gentle nest. I only wish to indicate the true position of nature in regard to man." Thus natural objects were only mediate things to him—not ultimate realities. Nature, to be sure, served many useful and noble purposes, even to hinting to man "the laws of right and wrong." "Every natural fact is a symbol of some spiritual fact." "The laws of moral nature answer to those of matter like face to face in a glass." "The axioms of physics translate the laws of ethics." "Every natural process is a version of a moral sentence." His choice of the ideal over the material, of mind over matter, as presenting the higher reality was considered and deliberate. "Be it [nature] what it may," he concluded in *Nature*, "it is ideal to me so long as I cannot try the accuracy of my senses."

This way of thinking made him what the philosophers call an idealist. But his idealism was subtle enough to accept both mind and matter, even while endeavoring, at various times during his life, to reconcile or identify the two with each other. An unhappy dualist, he sought throughout his life to unify his world—to make it monistic—to reduce the dualistic enigma of mind and matter to unity. To this end he searched the scientists from ancient to modern times no less than the idealistic philosophers from Plato to Kant and beyond. He sought to reconcile science and religion, or as he put it at one time, to make his "religion philosophical" and his "philosophy religious," and at another, "to square the head by the heart." In the process he rejected neither the natural nor the spiritual. He acknowledged "an occult relation between man and the vegetable. . . . They nod to me, and I to them." When his attempts at identifying the two failed, the mystic in him was content to believe in them both, imperfectly reconciled though they remained. But in the process, he alienated both the orthodox theologian and the strict scientist. Neither forgave him for what he conceded to the other. To the theologian he was a heretic, infidel, atheist; to the scientist, a transcendental dreamer, a mystical soothsayer, an impractical idealist.

These irreconciled elements in Emerson are not the only faults that men have found with Emerson. There are other inconsistencies that he did not

bother to harmonize. He had no patience with what he called "foolish consistency." He declared, "I delight in telling what I think, but if you ask me how I dare say so, or why it is so, I am the most helpless of mortal men." And when it was suggested that such an unsystematic procedure would never beget a large following, he could say, "Very well, I do not wish disciples." He defied tradition and authority, and he wrote in the mood of the moment, from inspiration, leaving each utterance to take care of itself in its own place and time. Hence it often turned out that what he said in one connection contradicts what he said in another. Accordingly the seekers after paradox have found it an easy matter to make him out "conservative, or liberal, or radical, orthodox or infidel, whig or tory, moralist or amoralist, belligerent or pacifist, patriot or traitor." And, on the basis of single or isolated passages, he is all these, and more too.

What is more, he was careless in his methods of composition, throwing together passages from his voluminous notebooks for a lecture or an essay with what seemed in some cases reckless abandon. He liked striking, epigrammatic sentences. He cared little for the paragraph, and less for the larger structural units. He avoided connectives, qualifying words and phrases, and transitional devices. His friend Carlyle observed in a letter to Emerson, "Your sentences are very *brief*; and did not, in my *sheet* reading, always entirely cohere for me. Pure genuine Saxon; strong and simple. . . . But they did not, sometimes, rightly stick to their foregoers and their followers: the paragraph not as a beaten *ingot*, but as a beautiful square *bag of duck-shot* held together by canvas!" And his auditors sometimes observed, as did Lowell of one of his lectures, "It was as if, after vainly trying to get his paragraphs into sequence and order, he had at last tried the desperate expedient of *shuffling* them. It was chaos come again, but it was a chaos full of shooting stars." "His eye for a fine, telling phrase that will carry true is like that of a backwoodsman for a rifle; and he will dredge you up a choice word from the mud of Cotton Mather himself. . . . it is like homespun cloth of gold. The many cannot miss his meaning, and only the few can find it." Speaking of a time when as a young enthusiast he first heard Emerson lecture, Lowell observed that while he and the other young people whom Emerson moved so profoundly came away uncertain about the precise meaning of anything Mr. Emerson had said, they came away feeling, "Thus saith the Lord." As a man of seventy, after he had gone to hear Emerson for forty years, Lowell wrote, "We do not

go to hear what Emerson says so much as to hear Emerson."

But whatever difficulties Emerson the lecturer or the essayist presented to his followers, and however many conflicts he failed to settle in his own mind, he was consistent on one point. He believed implicitly in the moral principle as supreme and absolute. His God seemed to many people of doubtful divinity, but no one doubted Emerson's faith in goodness. Indeed, goodness and Godliness were very nearly synonymous with Emerson. However much his philosophical opinions changed (and they changed a good deal from youth to old age, even from day to day), he never relinquished for a moment his faith that the distinction between "Right and Wrong . . . is real and eternal." As a young man of twenty he declared:

Your opinions upon all other topics, and your feelings with regard to this world, in childhood, youth, and age, perpetually change. Your perceptions of right and wrong never change. . . . The mind may lose its acquaintance with other minds, and may abandon, without a sigh, this glorious universe; but it cannot part with its moral principle . . . If there is anything real under heaven, or in heaven, the perception of right and wrong relates to that reality. . . . It is the constitution of the mind to rely with firm confidence upon the *moral principle*, and I reject at once the idea of a delusion in this. This is woven vitally into the thinking substance itself, so that it cannot be diminished or destroyed without dissipating forever that spirit which it inhabited. Upon the foundation of my *moral* sense I ground my faith in the immortality of the soul, in the existence and activity of good beings, and in the promise of rewards. . . .

This is the central idea to which all other ideas of Emerson's are related, and the student who wants to see the larger consistency of Emerson's doctrine, by which the smaller inconsistencies are dwarfed into insignificance, must get hold of this central idea.

Emerson came quite naturally by his moral fervor. He was the son not only of Puritans but of a long line of Puritan (later Unitarian) ministers; and if this background had not been enough, there was his revered Aunt Mary Moody Emerson, who lived with the Emersons, and who repeatedly drilled him in the doctrines of self-reliance and moral righteousness. The essay on "Self-Reliance" concludes with two summarizing, climactic sentences: "Nothing can bring you peace but yourself. Nothing can bring you peace but the triumph of principles." These two ideas spring ultimately from what we are accustomed to call Puritan independence and Puritan righteousness. More immediately, Emerson derived them directly from Aunt Mary. She became what his father might have been to him if he had not died in Em-

erson's ninth year. She was his spiritual adviser; and even after he went to college, it was to her, rather than to his mother or to his brothers, that he wrote to bare his heart or to ask spiritual guidance.

Emerson's educational opportunities were excellent considering that when his father died in 1811, his mother was left in straitened circumstances. But the First (Unitarian) congregation, over which his father had presided, assisted Mrs. Emerson in her efforts to give her five sons a college education—as was customary under such circumstances. For the rest, relatives helped, and Emerson helped himself by waiting on table in commons and running errands for the president of Harvard. While his academic record was indifferent, he read to good purpose on his own initiative. He won two prizes with essays on philosophical subjects during his junior and senior years, and was chosen poet of his class in 1821.

For four years after graduation he tried teaching, chiefly in a girls' school under the direction of his brother William, while trying to decide whether to enter the ministry, as his mother fervently wished. Beset by doubts of his capabilities for a ministerial career and especially by indecision about his own faith, he finally decided, in 1825, to enter the Harvard Divinity School. Realizing that his reasoning faculty was "weak," and that theology was "from everlasting to everlasting debatable ground," yet willing to risk all, as he said, on the strength of his "moral imagination," he made the choice deliberately, adding, "In divinity I hope to thrive."

But during the first year of theological studies, his eyes and lungs failed, and the old doubts returned in a degree that made him fear for his mental balance. Sick in body and mind, he went south for the winter of 1826-27, ultimately settling in Saint Augustine, Florida. Here he slowly recuperated, while discussing his problems with a wealthy, cultivated young planter named Achille Murat, of French birth and rearing and of liberal and atheistical opinions. Emerson's characterization of his friend as "a sincere and consistent Atheist" is indicative of the torn state of mind of the young probationer in the church. Yet the tough fiber that was Emersonian held, and out of the "dark hours" in Saint Augustine came a reaffirmation of will to resume his theological studies.

In March of 1829 he became the colleague of the Rev. Henry Ware, Jr., of the Second (Unitarian) Church in Boston, and upon Ware's becoming a professor in the Harvard Divinity School shortly thereafter, he was left in sole charge of this influential church. His life seemed to be regulating itself, and he had every hopeful prospect when Ellen Louisa

Tucker, to whom he had become engaged in 1828, fell suddenly ill of consumption early in 1829 and the marriage had to be postponed until September. A year later he buried her. Meanwhile his favorite brother Edward had been reduced by a violent mental derangement to the state of a maniac. Under these stresses, Emerson's own health suffered. The strictures in his chest returned and he began to fear anew the "hereditary taint" of his family. His old doubts assailed him again. A strenuous course of reading in the sciences served only to aggravate his theological questioning. All his doubts came to a head in the summer of 1832 over the interpretation of rites and ceremonies in the church. He decided that he could not go on administering the Lord's Supper to his parishioners in the accepted way unless the congregation chose to agree with him and regard it as merely symbolic. Since they did not choose, he resigned, and shortly after preaching his last sermon, in which he stated the grounds of his dissent, he sailed for Europe. He had read the works of Landor, Coleridge, Wordsworth, and Carlyle; if he read them correctly, he concluded that they should be able to help him find answers for his questions. This unfrocking himself, abandoning the only profession for which he had been trained, and which promised a successful career, while striking out anew, at the age of thirty, with nothing more definite than a vague desire to write—this took courage, and it illustrates again his stiff-necked refusal to sacrifice principle for expediency.

Following a rapid tour of Italy, where he saw Landor, and a stop in Paris, where he haunted the natural museums, he visited Coleridge, Wordsworth, and Carlyle, and came away thoroughly disappointed in all but Carlyle. Coleridge, prematurely old at sixty-two, turned out to be "a short thick old man . . . anything but what I had imagined," and his visit to him was "rather a spectacle than a conversation, of no use beyond the satisfaction of my curiosity." Wordsworth, too, was a disappointment—lost by now in hopeless orthodoxy, his mind closed to all new currents of thought. Carlyle he warmed up to. Carlyle was hearty, genuine, and invigorating. But even in Carlyle he found a measure of disappointment; for however pleasant he found the Scotchman, he roundly evaded his questions—the questions Emerson had come specifically to get help on—questions regarding the ultimate worth of Christianity, the immortality of the soul, the free will of man. Emerson was left with the conclusion—the only possible conclusion—that these men could not help him, that nobody could help him, that he must help him-

self. It was ironical, he reflected, that he had traveled thousands of miles to find what had lain right within his own self all along. It was the great lesson of selfhood, of self-reliance, that he found at the end of his long and devious route.

Under the cheering impulse of this discovery, he began to put words together toward his first book, even before he started his return voyage. He bethought himself of his "penny Savings Bank," the notebooks, in which, since 1820, he had been recording all notable thoughts that had come to him. He began now to put the fragments together, and he was cheered to find the "fractions made integers by their addition." With self-reliance came articulation; and at the end of the first stint of writing those passages which ultimately formed the gist of *Nature*, he told himself in self-congratulatory mood, "I like my book about Nature." This was September 8, 1833. Three years were to elapse before the little booklet was to be done, for his decision to write not merely on "Nature" but also on "Spirit" threw many a metaphysical stumbling block into his way. It reopened the whole problem of mind *versus* matter, for the questionable solution of which (as he achieved it in *Nature*) he finally found help in the transcendental philosophy of Kant as interpreted to him by Coleridge's *Aids to Reflection* and Carlyle's essays.

German transcendentalism as promulgated by Kant was a philosophical analysis of the powers of the mind, an attempt to determine what could and could not be known by human understanding and reason. Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781) demonstrated that while the human understanding is capable of dealing reliably with sensory phenomena and demonstrable truths, the reason is powerless to reduce to absolute and verifiable knowledge such ultra-rational ideas as the soul has of God, of Immortality, and of Freedom. They remain ideas, beyond the realms of time and space. In his *Critique of Practical Reason* (1788) Kant went on to argue that within the realm of practice and on the basis of the assumption of moral necessity these ideas could be shown to have a practical validity, even if they could not be proved absolutely on purely logical or rational grounds. But this kind of practical "knowledge," he very carefully pointed out, rested on an assumption which itself remained unproved.

Emerson did not grasp fully the negative aspects of the Kantian criticism, but was led to believe, on the basis of what his English interpreters told him about the efficacy of the Kantian distinction between Understanding and Reason to prove the absolute validity of the Ideas of the Reason—what Kant had



specifically demonstrated to be impossible. Although Emerson later made a disheartening attempt to read Kant himself, he knew nothing of him at first hand while he was writing *Nature*. Hence the confused point of view in that booklet between the sections on Nature and on Spirit, and his assertion of the reason's dominion over those areas which Kant had reserved to the realm of moral probability in terms of the "practically," rather than the "absolutely," true. In the summer of 1836, while putting the finishing touches to *Nature*, Emerson confessed that there still remained in his argument for the identity of Nature and Spirit "a crack . . . not easy to be soldered or welded"; and in the conclusion of the book he had to admit that he had presented nothing more than "a hypothesis" which still remained to be verified.

Yet the rumble of Kant's dialectic is clearly discernible in *Nature*. The Kantian tripartition of the mental faculties into Sensation, Understanding, and Reason supplied the epistemological terminology for the doctrines enunciated in *Nature* and the metaphysical groundwork for Emersonian transcendentalism generally. The application of this epistemological machinery is to be discovered chiefly in the careful subdivisions which Emerson made under the four Uses of Nature, each of which falls neatly into three sections depending on whether they are the object of the Sensation, the Understanding, or the Reason. But the attentive reader will discover that there was still something that eluded Emerson and that left him dissatisfied with his attempted identification of Nature with Spirit, matter with mind. For, in the section on "Spirit," this doctrine of transcendental idealism, as he understood it, is put down as being, "in the present state of our knowledge, merely . . . a useful introductory hypothesis." This indefinite and unsatisfying conclusion is owing in part to Emerson's inability to rid his mind of the old and familiar terminology of Berkeleyan idealism even while he believed himself to be following the newer critical terminology of Kant; but it is owing chiefly to his failure to recognize the sharp distinctions drawn by Kant between practical and pure Reason, or between the provisionally and the absolutely true—between moral necessity and absolute certitude. The phrase, "in the present state of our knowledge," suggests that he still entertained hopes that the hypothesis might be proved to be something more than a mere hypothesis; but Emerson himself soon became dissatisfied with the strictly logical and critical method of transcendentalism, and the period during which he was under Kantian influence was relatively brief.

By the time he wrote "The Over-Soul," about

1839, Emerson had lapsed back into Platonic intuitionism, a mode of thinking for which his mind was congenitally better suited. In that essay and in other essays of the period, like "Circles," he is the seer, whose faith perceived truth through revelation, intuitively by divination, immediately and unreflectively. This intuitive, or neo-Platonic, phase was followed by a period when he gave up technical philosophical questions and problems altogether, meanwhile contenting himself with writing essays and lectures on practical, common-sensical subjects, as illustrated by "Experience," "Politics," "Friendship," "Prudence," *Representative Men*, and reforms and reformers as he saw them eddying all about him in the New England of the forties. About 1850, he was attracted to Hegelianism as offering a philosophy consonant with the new nineteenth-century concept of "progressive development," and after 1859, when Darwin's *Origin of Species* gave the idea of evolution a new urgency, he renewed his quest for a philosophy that would embrace both the new science and his old religious or moral demands. But the theoretical and abstract methods of Hegel and the mental gymnastics demanded by the triadic development of the Hegelian dialectic were essentially alien to his mind. Though his friends among the St. Louis Hegelians and, later, among the Concord School of Philosophy, sought earnestly to instruct him, he never learned its techniques or entered into its spirit. Philosophy remained for him, he said late in life, "the eternal homesickness of the soul." He could neither get along with it nor without it; and however often he told himself that he was done with all metaphysical gibberish, he always returned to philosophy, to be plagued further by its inconclusiveness.

While these shifts and changes in Emerson's thinking on the technical problems involved in the processes of knowing are of real interest chiefly to the mature student of Emerson, they are indicative of one of the basic causes for the so-called contradictions among Emerson's ideas. It would be too much to expect that a man whose epistemological bases shifted so frequently should, during all the periods of his mental development, indite thoughts that would be infallibly consistent with each other.

When Carlyle first read *Nature*, he immediately recognized in it "the Foundation or Ground-plan," on which, he told Emerson, "You may build whatsoever of great and true you have been given to build"; and Emerson soon set to expounding its individual principles and following out its implications. In 1837 he delivered his lecture on "The American Scholar" before the Phi Beta Kappa Society of Harvard. Called

by later critics the American Declaration of Intellectual Independence, it created no great stir at the time. The next year he delivered the "Divinity School Address" and earned for himself the reputation of a heretic. Striking out boldly at "the pale negations of Boston Unitarianism," he pleaded for a revitalization of Christianity that should be fresh, vivid, and personal. His enumeration of the defects of "historical Christianity" and his prescriptions for a reformation were taken by his auditors, some of whom were his old professors, as an attack upon them; and his one-time colleague, the Rev. Henry Ware, wrote to him demanding a particularization of the grounds and arguments on which Emerson brought his charges. It was on this occasion that Emerson wrote his famous letter refusing to give his reasons, explaining that he did "not know what arguments mean in reference to an expression of a thought," meanwhile maintaining his right to express his honest thoughts. In one sense it was Emerson's declaration of independence from the tyranny of philosophical method; in another, more immediate connection, it was a bland denial of the right of controversialists to draw him into polemical debate. Those who felt themselves to be the objects of his attack doubtless thought this an evasive and unfair trick, but it left them powerless, for Emerson steadfastly refused to be provoked into defending his pronouncements or into replying to the countercharges of his opponents, at the same time that it saved him from recriminatory wranglings and vexatious conflicts.

During the early thirties a series of deeply moving personal influences assailed his spirit. The death of his wife in 1832, his repudiation of the church in the same year, and the broadening experience of his first European journey in 1833 were followed in 1834 by the death of his brother Edward, and a year and a half later by the death of Charles—"my brother, my friend, my ornament, my joy and pride." In 1835 he moved into the Old Manse of Concord, the house built by his grandfather, to take what he felt at the time to be his proper place in the "quiet fields of my fathers." His going to Concord was the consummation of a desire expressed in 1823, in the poem which begins "Good-bye, proud world! I'm going home." Thither he brought in 1835 his second bride, Lydia Jackson. The next year he bought the house and plot of ground which was to be his home for the remainder of his days; and here, two years later, he held his first child in his arms. Truly, he reflected, life was running deep; it was both real and earnest, compounded of deep sorrows and abiding satisfactions. Under these humanizing experiences he was

stimulated to resume his writing, completing *Nature* in 1836, writing "The American Scholar" in 1837, the "Divinity School Address" in 1838, and a number of other essays, as well as lectures and poems. It was as if these soul-stirring events had been wanting to shock him into expression.

In 1836 he became the leading spirit in the formation of the Transcendental Club, which included such like-minded idealists as George Ripley, Theodore Parker, James Freeman Clarke, Elizabeth Palmer Peabody, Margaret Fuller, Amos Bronson Alcott, O. A. Brownson, W. H. Channing, and Frederic H. Hedge. He deliberated with them the plans that led to the Brook Farm experiment in communal living, but his deep-seated genius for pursuing his own individual way (as well as his family responsibilities) prevented his going there to live. During the first two years of the *Dial* (1841-42), he assisted Margaret Fuller in editing this noble experiment in journalism, and during the last two years of its existence he served as its sole editor. In 1841 appeared his *Essays, First Series*, followed three years later by the *Second Series*. Meanwhile he had been acquiring a commanding reputation as a lecturer, and his poems were adding to his renown. His first collection of *Poems* appeared in 1847, the year of his second trip to Europe. His lectures were enthusiastically received in England, and upon his return home he became the most renowned of the numerous lyceum lecturers. He made almost annually a wide sweep through the country, often as far west as the Mississippi, to spread his doctrine of idealism far and wide, even to the outposts of the frontier. In the meantime, he published three more of his more important books: *Representative Men* (1850), *English Traits* (1856), and *Conduct of Life* (1860).

During the years before the Civil War, the human issues involved overcame his dislike for organized reform until he was fairly drawn into the vortex to become one of the most impassioned disciples of abolition and, like Thoreau, a castigator of Northern expediency and lethargy no less than of Southern excess and injustice.

Following the war he regularly attended the dinners and participated in the conversations of the Saturday Club, which included Longfellow, Holmes, Agassiz, Whittier, Lowell, Dana, Motley, and Hawthorne, among others. By now Harvard had forgiven or forgotten the offense which the "Divinity School Address" had provoked in 1838; and accordingly, twenty-nine years later, he was invited to deliver another Phi Beta Kappa address. In 1867, too, he published *May Day*, a volume of poems. *Society and*

*Solitude* appeared in 1870, and in the same year he delivered a series of philosophical lectures at Harvard, published in 1893 under the title of *Natural History of the Intellect*.

In 1871, at the age of sixty-eight, he traveled all the way to California, thus realizing his ambition to know more fully the western frontier, which had been a constant source of stimulation to his optimistic philosophy. Later in the same year he revisited England, France, and Italy, journeying even as far as Egypt. On his return, he was welcomed by his townspeople into the new home which they had built for him after his former house had been destroyed by fire. He remained active to the end and published *Letters and Social Aims* in 1875. But thereafter his memory began to fade, and during his last public appearances as a lecturer he required the assistance of his daughter or a friend to help him keep his pages of notes in order. At Longfellow's funeral in 1882, only a month before his own passing, he looked intently upon the face of the dead poet, and then turned to a friend to say, "That gentleman was a sweet, beautiful soul, but I have entirely forgotten his name." His death came on April 24, 1882, of pneumonia, in his seventy-ninth year, and a few days later he was buried among his former Concord friends in Sleepy Hollow Cemetery.

Emerson has been variously interpreted and reinterpreted. There are those who like his essays and others who prefer his poems, Edwin Arlington Robinson, for example, considering him the greatest American poet. His poems, like his essays, have some stylistic and structural defects that a more meticulous craftsman would not have countenanced. Emerson cared little for prosodic perfection or melodic effects,

being intent primarily upon the idea he wished to convey. In the essay on "The Poet" he wrote, "It is not metres, but a metre-making argument, that makes a poem." He had a low opinion of pure literature; he believed that "the high poetry of the world from its beginning has been ethical, and it is the tendency of the ripe modern mind to produce it." In his verses, as in his essays, he is at his best in short passages, and the number of quotable lines is large. "Every poem," he said, "must be made up of lines that are poems." Hence the cryptic, epigrammatic nature of his poems.

Aware of his own deficiencies as a poet, he once remarked to a friend, "I feel it a hardship that—with something of a lover's passion for what is to me the most precious thing in life, poetry—I have no gift of fluency in it, only a rude and stammering utterance." Yet a surprising number of his poetic utterances—single lines, couplets, and quatrains—have become an intimate portion of the American people's poetic heritage.

Fundamentally, it is true that Emerson is Emerson, and that it makes little difference whether one reads his poems, his essays, or his lectures, or the sources of all three—his notebooks; they are all derived from that common storehouse, his voluminous journals, in which he preserved his thoughts, and out of which he extracted or selected the several ingredients that he combined and fused into the poetic wisdom that maintains for him a central place among American men of letters. His message of individualistic idealism, warning men that "things are in the saddle" and that they are riding mankind, in a way to debase the truly humanistic potentiality of man, remains as vital and stimulating today as it was to the men of his own day.

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## FROM

*Emerson's Journals*<sup>1</sup>

## Dedication

Boston, July 11, 1822.

I dedicate my book to the Spirit of America. I dedicate it to that living soul, which doth exist somewhere beyond the Fancy, to whom the Divinity hath assigned the care of this bright corner of the Universe. I bring my little offering in this month, which covers the continent with matchless beauty, to the shrine, which distant generations shall load with sacrifice, and distant ages shall admire afar off. With a spark of prophetic vision, I hasten to hail the Genius, who yet counts the tardy years of childhood, but who is increasing unawares in the twilight, and swelling into strength, until the hour he shall break the cloud, to shew his colossal youth, and cover the firmament with the shadow of his wings.

January 11 [1823].

There is one distinction amid these fading phenomena—one decided distinction which is real and eternal and which will survive nature—I mean the distinction of Right and Wrong. Your opinions upon all other topics, and your feelings with regard to this

world, in childhood, youth, and age, perpetually change. Your perceptions of right and wrong never change. You can dismiss the world from your mind, and almost abolish in your imagination the dominion of sense; but you can never bury in your breast the sense of offended Justice. . . .

The mind may lose its acquaintance with other minds, and may abandon, without a sigh, this glorious universe . . . but it cannot part with its moral principle, by which it becomes akin to the extraordinary intelligences that are to accompany its everlasting journey to the throne of God. If there be anything real under heaven, or in heaven, the perception of right and wrong relates to that reality . . . it is the constitution of the mind to rely with firm . . . confidence upon the *moral* principle, and I reject at once the idea of a delusion in this. It is woven vitally into the thinking substance itself, so that it cannot be diminished or destroyed without dissipating forever that spirit which it inhabited. Upon the foundation of my *moral* sense I ground my faith in the immortality of the soul, in the existence and activity of good beings, and in the promise of rewards accommodated hereafter. . . .<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Emerson began keeping a regular journal in 1820, during his junior year at Harvard.

<sup>2</sup> This entry is important as indicating Emerson's steadfast faith in moral reality.

*Sunday, April 18, 1824.*

I am beginning my professional studies. In a month I shall be legally a man. And I deliberately dedicate my time, my talents, and my hopes to the Church. Man is an animal that looks before and after; and I should be loth to reflect at a remote period that I took so solemn a step in my existence without some careful examination of my past and present life. Since I cannot alter, I would not repent the resolution I have made, and this page must bear witness to the latest year of my life whether I have good grounds to warrant my determination.

I cannot dissemble that my abilities are below my ambition . . . my reasoning faculty is proportionally weak, nor can I ever hope to write a Butler's Analogy or an Essay of Hume. Nor is it strange that with this confession I should choose theology, which is from everlasting to everlasting "debatable ground." For, the highest species of reasoning upon divine subject is rather the fruit of a sort of moral imagination, than of the "Reasoning Machines," such as Locke and Clarke and David Hume. . . . But in Divinity I hope to thrive.

[Dark Hours] St. Augustine, Florida [1827].<sup>3</sup>

. . . What am I in the general system of being but an iota, an unregarded speck? . . . And what is the amount of all that is called religion in the world. Who is he that has seen God of whom so much is known, or where is one that has arisen from the dead? Satisfy me beyond the possibility of doubt of the certainty of all that is told me concerning the other world, and I will fulfil the condition on which my salvation is suspended. The believer tells me he has an evidence, historical and internal, which makes the presumption so strong that it is almost a certainty, that it rests on the highest probabilities. Yes; but change that imperfect to perfect evidence, and I too will be a Christian. But now it must be admitted I am not certain that any of these things are true. The nature of God may be different from what is represented. I never beheld him. I do not know that he exists.

Liverpool [England] *September 1* [1833].

I thank the Great God who has led me through this European scene, this last schoolroom in which he has pleased to instruct me. . . . He has shown me

<sup>3</sup> This selection is indicative of the "Storm-and-Stress" period that Emerson experienced at the time.

the men I wished to see,—Landor, Coleridge, Carlyle, Wordsworth; he has thereby comforted and confirmed me in my convictions. Many things I owe to the sight of these men. I shall judge more justly, less timidly, of wise men forevermore. To be sure not one of these is a mind of the very first class. . . . Upon an intelligent man, wholly a stranger to their names, they would make in conversation no deep impression, none of a world-filling fame,—they would be remembered as sensible, well-bred, earnest men, not more. Especially are they all deficient, all these four,—in different degrees, but all deficient,—in insight into religious truth. They have no idea of that species of moral truth which I call the first philosophy. . . .

Liverpool, *September 2.*

. . . I must spin my thread from my own bowels<sup>4</sup> . . . It occurs forcibly, yea, somewhat pathetically, that he who visits a man of genius out of admiration for his parts should treat him tenderly. 'Tis odds but he will be disappointed. . . .

At Sea, *Sunday, September 8.*

. . . This is my charge plain and clear, to act faithfully upon my own faith, to live by it myself, and see what a hearty obedience to it will do. . . .

I believe that the error of religionists lies in this, that they do not know the extent or the harmony or the depth of their moral nature; that they are clinging to little, positive, verbal, formal versions of the moral law, and very imperfect versions too, while the infinite laws, the laws of the Law, the great circling truths whose only adequate symbol is the material laws, the astronomy, etc., are all unobserved. . . . I call Calvinism such an imperfect version of the moral law. Unitarianism is another, and every form of Christian and of pagan faith in the hands of incapable teachers is such a version. . . .

. . . A man contains all that is needful to his government within himself. He is made a law unto himself. All real good or evil that can befall him must be from himself. He only can do himself any good or any harm. Nothing can be given to him or taken from him but always there is a compensation. There is a correspondence between the human soul and everything that exists in the world; more properly, everything that is known to man. Instead of studying things without the principles of them, all may be

<sup>4</sup> That is, depend upon myself.

penetrated unto within him. Every act puts the agent in a new condition. The purpose of life seems to be to acquaint a man with himself. He is not to live to the future as described to him, but to live in the real future by living in the real present. The highest revelation is that God is in every man.

Newton, April 12 [1834].

All the mistakes I make arise from forsaking my own station and trying to see the object from another person's point of view.

June 18.

Webster's speeches seem to be the utmost that the unpoetic West has accomplished or can. We all lean on England; scarce a verse, a page, a newspaper, but is writ in imitation of English forms; our very manners and conversation are traditional, and sometimes the life seems dying out of all literature, and this enormous paper currency of Words is accepted instead. I suppose the evil may be cured by this rank rabble party, Jacksonianism<sup>5</sup> of the country, heedless of English and of all literature—a stone cut out of the ground without hands;—they may root out the hollow dilettantism of our cultivation in the coarsest way, and the newborn may begin again to frame their own world with greater advantage.

Concord, November 15.

Hail to the quiet fields of my fathers! Not wholly unattended by supernatural friendship and favor, let me come hither.<sup>6</sup> Bless my purposes as they are simple and virtuous. . . . Henceforth I design not to utter any speech, poem or book that is not entirely and peculiarly my work. I will say at public lectures, and the like, those things which I have meditated for their own sake, and not for the first time with a view to that occasion. If, otherwise, you select a new subject, and labor to make a good appearance on the appointed day, it is so much lost time to you, and lost time to your hearer. It is a parenthesis in your genuine life. You are your own dupe, and for the sake of conciliating your audience you have failed to edify them, and, winning their ear, you have really lost their love and gratitude.

Respect man! assuredly, but in general only as a potential God, and therefore richly deserving of your

<sup>5</sup> An indication that Emerson was not utterly contemptuous of Jackson and the Jacksonian spirit.

<sup>6</sup> Characteristic of Emerson's feeling toward Concord, whither he went in 1835 to make his home.

pity and your tears. Now he is only a scrap, an ort, an end, and in his actual being no more worthy of your veneration than the poor lunatic. But the simplest person who, in his integrity, worships God, becomes God: at least no optics of human mind can detect the line where man, the effect, ceases, and God, the Cause, begins.

Unhappy divorce of Religion and Philosophy. . . .

August 18 [1838].

. . . Dr. Ripley<sup>7</sup> prays for rain with great explicitness on Sunday, and on Monday the showers fell. When I spoke of the speed with which his prayers were answered, the good man looked modest.

September 19.

. . . The greater the man, the less are books to him. Day by day he lessens the distance between him and his authors, and soon finds very few to whom he can pay so high a compliment as to read them.

October 27.

. . . Mrs. Ripley is superior to all she knows. She reminds one of a steam-mill of great activity and power which must be fed, and she grinds German, Italian, Greek, Chemistry, Metaphysics, Theology, with utter indifference which,—something she must have to keep the machine from tearing itself.<sup>8</sup>

October 29.

. . . Sincerity is the highest compliment you can pay. Jones Very<sup>9</sup> charmed us all by telling us he hated us all.

May 23 [1839].

. . . My College should have Allston, Greenough, Bryant, Irving, Webster, Alcott, summoned for its domestic professors. And if I must send abroad (and, if we send for dancers and singers and actors, why not at the same prices for scholars?), Carlyle, Hallam, Campbell, should come and read lectures on History, Poetry, Letters. I would bid my men come for the love of God and man, promising them an open field and a boundless opportunity, and they should make their own terms. Then I would open my lecture rooms to the wide nation; and they should pay, each man, a fee that should give my professor

<sup>7</sup> The Unitarian pastor in Concord.

<sup>8</sup> Emerson's half-humorous tribute to Mrs. George Ripley's intellectual energy.

<sup>9</sup> Jones Very (1813–80), essayist and poet, and a minor Transcendentalist.

a remuneration fit and noble. Then I should see the lecture-room, the college, filled with life and hope. Students would come from far; for who would not ride a hundred miles to hear some one of these men giving his selectest thoughts to those who received them with joy? I should see living learning; the Muse once more in the eye and cheek of the youth.

May 26.

. . . Allston's pictures are Elysian; fair, serene, but unreal.

I extend the remark to all the American geniuses. Irving, Bryant, Greenough, Everett, Channing, even Webster in his recorded Eloquence, all lack nerve and dagger.

May 27.

A great genius must come and preach self-reliance. Our people are timid, desponding, recreant whimperers. If they fail in their first enterprises they lose all heart. If the young merchant fails, men say he is RUINED.<sup>10</sup> . . . My brave Henry [Thoreau] here who is content to live now, and feels no shame in not studying any profession, for he does not postpone his life, but lives already,—pours contempt on these crybabies of routine and Boston. He has not one chance but a hundred chances. Now let a stern preacher arise who shall reveal the resources of man, and tell men they are not leaning willows. . . .

June 6.

. . . My life is a May game, I will live as I like. I defy your strait-laced, weary, social ways and modes. Blue is the sky, green the fields and groves, fresh the springs, glad the rivers, and hospitable the splendor of sun and star. I will play my game out. . . .

September 18.

. . . With the Past, as past, I have nothing to do; nor with the Future, as future. I live now, and will verify all past history in my own moments.

September 29.

. . . When I was thirteen years old, my Uncle Samuel Ripley one day asked me, "How is it, Ralph,

<sup>10</sup> Here the editors of Emerson's *Journals*, Edward Waldo Emerson and Waldo Emerson Forbes, inserted this note: "Here follows the long passage printed in 'Self-Reliance' (p. 79 [beginning, 'If your young men miscarry in their first enterprises they lose heart. If the young merchant fails, men say he is ruined.']), of which a few sentences are here given as showing that they were inspired by the manly young Thoreau."

that all the boys dislike you and quarrel with you, whilst the grown people are fond of you?" Now I am thirty-six and the fact is reversed,—the old people suspect and dislike me, and the young love me.

October 26.

. . . *The Past*.—The Centuries are conspirators against the sanity and majesty of the soul. The greatness of Greece consists in this, that no Greece preceded it. . . .

October 28.

The world can never be learned by learning all its details. . . .

November 17.

Why should they call me good-natured? I too, like puss, have a retractile claw. . . .

November 21.

. . . You teach your boy to walk, but he learns to run himself.

December 1.

Gather yourself into a ball to be thrown at a mark.<sup>11</sup>

December 22.

. . . Some books leave us free and some books make us free.

April 7, [1840].

. . . In all my lectures, I have taught one doctrine, namely, the infinitude of the private man. This the people accept readily enough, and even with loud commendation, as long as I call the lecture Art, or Politics, or Literature, or the Household; but the moment I call it Religion, they are shocked, though it be only the application of the same truth which they receive everywhere else, to a new class of facts.

May 10.

Beware when the great God lets loose a new thinker on this planet.

June 21.

*Montaigne*.—The language of the street is always strong. What can describe the folly and emptiness of scolding like the word *jawing*? I feel too the force of the double negative, though clean contrary to our grammar rules. And I confess to some pleasure from

<sup>11</sup> Evidently a memorandum written to himself on the manner to be cultivated in expressing himself—namely, to develop precision, conciseness, compactness, force.

the stinging rhetoric of a rattling oath in the mouth of truckmen and teamsters. How laconic and brisk it is by the side of a page of the *North American Review*. Cut these words and they will bleed; they are vascular and alive; they walk and run. Moreover they who speak them have this elegance, that they do not trip in their speech. It is a shower of bullets, whilst Cambridge men and Yale men correct themselves and begin again at every half sentence.

I know nobody among my contemporaries except Carlyle who writes with any sinew and vivacity comparable to Plutarch and Montaigne. Yet always this profane swearing and bar-room wit has salt and fire in it. I cannot now read Webster's speeches. Fuller and Browne and Milton are quick, but the list is soon ended. Goethe seems to be well alive, no pedant. Luther too.

July 10.

All diseases run into one, Old Age. We grizzle every day.

October 17.

Yesterday George and Sophia Ripley, Margaret Fuller and Alcott discussed here the Social Plans.<sup>12</sup> I wished to be convinced, to be thawed, to be made nobly mad by the kindlings before my eye of a new dawn of human piety. But this scheme was arithmetic and comfort: this was a hint borrowed from the Tremont House and United States Hotel; a rage in our poverty and politics to live rich and gentlemanlike, an anchor to leeward against a change of weather; a prudent forecast on the probable issue of the great questions of Pauperism and Poverty. And not once could I be inflamed, but sat aloof and thoughtless; my voice faltered and fell. It was not the cave of persecution which is the palace of spiritual power, but only a room in the Astor House hired for the Transcendentalists. I do not wish to remove from my present prison to a prison a little larger. I wish to break all prisons. I have not yet conquered my own house. It irks and repents me. Shall I raise the siege of this hencoop, and march baffled away to a pretended siege of Babylon? It seems to me that so to do were to dodge the problem I am set to solve, and to hide my impotency in the thick of a crowd. I can see too, afar,—that I should not find myself more than now,—no, not so much, in that select, but not by me selected, fraternity. Moreover, to join this

<sup>12</sup> That is, the project of the community at Brook Farm.

body would be to traverse all my long trumpeted theory, and the instinct which spoke from it, that one man is a counterpoise to a city,—that a man is stronger than a city, that his solitude is more prevalent and beneficent than the concert of crowds.

October 18.

The history of Jesus is only the history of every man written large. The names he bestows on Jesus belong to himself,—Mediator, Redeemer, Saviour.

October 24.

. . . My page about "Consistency"<sup>13</sup> would be better written thus: Damn Consistency!

November 21.

. . . A[lcott] is a tedious archangel.<sup>14</sup>

August 27 [1841].

I remember, when a child, in the pew on Sundays amusing myself with saying over common words as "black," "white," "board," etc., twenty or thirty times, until the word lost all meaning and fixedness, and I began to doubt which was the right name for the thing, when I saw that neither had any natural relation but all was arbitrary. This was the child's first lesson in Idealism.<sup>15</sup>

October 8.

The view taken of Transcendentalism in State Street is that it threatens to invalidate contracts.

October 9.

I would have my book read as I have read my favorite books, not with explosion and astonishment, a marvel and a rocket, but a friendly and agreeable influence stealing like the scent of a flower, or the sight of a new landscape on a traveller. I neither wish to be hated and defied by such as I startle, nor to be kissed and hugged by the young whose thoughts I stimulate.

October 24.

. . . I told Garrison<sup>16</sup> that I thought he must be a very young man, or his time hang very heavy on his

<sup>13</sup> A reference to the sections on Consistency in "Self-Reliance."

<sup>14</sup> Emerson's note following a visit from Alcott.

<sup>15</sup> This passage suggests that Emerson naturally or innately inclined to doubt the reality of "sense and outward things," and that already as a child he placed greater trust in the ideal world.

<sup>16</sup> William Lloyd Garrison (1805-79), spearhead of New England Abolitionism. As late as 1842, Emerson was still holding aloof from reform movements like Abolitionism. After 1850 he came to take an increasingly active part in the agitation.



hands, who can afford to think much and talk much about the foibles of his neighbors, or 'denounce,' and play 'the son of thunder' as he called it.

March 20 [1842].

The *Dial* is to be sustained or ended, and I must settle the question, it seems, of its life or death. I wish it to live, but do not wish to be its life. Neither do I like to put it in the hands of the Humanity and Reform Men, because they trample on letters and poetry; nor in the hands of the Scholars, for they are dead and dry.<sup>17</sup>

March 24.

Alcott sees the law of man truer and farther than any one ever did. Unhappily, his conversation never loses sight of his own personality. He never quotes; he never refers; his only illustration is his own biography. His topic yesterday is Alcott on the 17th October; today, Alcott on the 18th October; tomorrow, on the 19th. So will it be always. The poet, rapt into future times or into deeps of nature admired for themselves, lost in their law, cheers us with a lively charm; but this noble genius discredits genius to me. I do not want any more such persons to exist.<sup>18</sup>

September 1.

I have so little vital force that I could not stand the dissipation of a flowing and friendly life;<sup>19</sup> I should die of consumption in three months. But now I husband all my strength in this bachelor life I lead: no doubt I shall be a well-preserved old gentleman.

June 16.

Elizabeth Hoar<sup>20</sup> says that Shelley is like shining sand; it always looks attractive and valuable, but, try never so many times, you cannot get anything good. And yet the mica-glitter will still remain after all.

July 12.

. . . Carlyle represents very well the literary man, makes good the place of and the function of Erasmus and Johnson, of Dryden and Swift, to our generation.

<sup>17</sup> The result was that he assumed the editorship for the next two years, Thoreau acting as his assistant.

<sup>18</sup> Emerson let fall a number of harsh judgments on Alcott, as when he said, "Alcott is a pail without a bottom." "Alcott and Hawthorne together would make a man." "Alcott has precious goods on his shelves; but he has no show-window." It should be remembered, however, that he also said, "Socrates thought Athens ought to support him; and Alcott thinks Boston Commonwealth ought to support him—and it ought!"

He is thoroughly the gentleman and deserves well of the whole fraternity of scholars, for sustaining the dignity of his profession of Author in England. Yet I always feel his limitation, and praise him as one who plays his part according to his light, as I praise the Clays and Websters. For Carlyle is worldly, and speaks not out of the celestial regions of Milton and Angels.

September 4.

Nathanicl Hawthorne's reputation as a writer is a very pleasant fact, because his writing is not good for anything, and this is a tribute to the man.

. . . I question when I read Tennyson's *Ulysses*, whether there is taste in England to do justice to the poet. . . .

If in this last book of Wordsworth's there be dulness, it is yet the dulness of a great and cultivated mind.

October 12.

Thou shalt read Homer, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Aristophanes, Plato, Proclus, Plotinus, Jamblichus, Porphyry, Aristotle, Virgil, Plutarch, Apuleius, Chaucer, Dante, Rabelais, Montaigne, Cervantes, Shakspeare, Jonson, Ford, Chapman, Beaumont and Fletcher, Bacon, Marvell, More, Milton, Moliere, Swedenborg, Goethe.

October 26.

Boston is not quite a mean place, since in walking yesterday in the street I met George Bancroft, Horatio Greenough, Sampson Reed, Sam Ward, Theodore Parker, George Bradford, and had a talk with each of them. . . .

Henry Thoreau made, last night, the fine remark that, as long as man stands in his own way, everything seems to be in his way, governments, society, and even the sun and moon and stars, as astrology may testify.

November 26.

This old Bible, if you pitch it out of the window with a fork, it comes bounce back again.

<sup>19</sup> Much earlier, Emerson had written in his journal (Cambridge, September 28, 1826): ". . . I was born cold. My bodily habit is cold. I shiver in and out; don't heat to the good purposes called enthusiasm a quarter so quick and kindly as my neighbours. . . ."

<sup>20</sup> Friend and neighbor of Emerson's at Concord. His *Journals* contain numerous sayings or observations of hers.

July 8 [1843].

The sun and the evening sky do not look calmer than Alcott and his family at Fruitlands. . . .<sup>21</sup>

I will not prejudge them successful. They look well in July. We will see them in December.

August 25.

Henry Thoreau sends me a paper<sup>22</sup> with the old fault of unlimited contradiction. The trick of his rhetoric is soon learned: it consists in substituting for the obvious word and thought the diametrical antagonist. He praises wild mountains and winter forests for their domestic air; snow and ice for their warmth; villagers and wood-choppers for their urbanity, and the wilderness for resembling Rome and Paris. . . .

September 26.

Alcott came, the magnificent dreamer, brooding, as ever, on the renewal or reëdification of the social fabric after ideal law, heedless that he had been uniformly rejected by every class to whom he had addressed himself, and just as sanguine and vast as ever. . . . Very pathetic it is to see this wandering Emperor from year to year making his round of visits from house to house of such as do not exclude him, seeking a companion, tired of pupils.

December 31.

We rail at trade, but the historian of the world will see that it was the principle of liberty; that it settled America, and destroyed feudalism, and made peace and keeps peace; that it will abolish slavery.<sup>23</sup>

October 15 [1844].

The sun and moon are in my way when I would be solitary.

March [1845].

The only use which the country people can imagine of a scholar, the only compliment they can think of to pay him, is, to ask him to deliver a

<sup>21</sup> Alcott, like Emerson, was too much the individualist to join the Brook Farm Association, but he founded a community of his own and called it Fruitlands. The chief crop was to be apples. Emerson, who knew his friend—his virtues, eccentricities, and impracticalities—observed on another occasion, "The fault of Alcott's community is that it has only room for one." Mrs. Alcott later spoke of Fruitlands, with characteristic dry humor, as "Apple-slump."

<sup>22</sup> Presumably an essay submitted for publication in the *Dial*.

<sup>23</sup> Obviously Emerson did not consistently condemn trade and industry. Compare his "Ode Inscribed to W. H. Channing," especially lines 43-57. See also his essay on "The Young American."

Temperance Lecture, or to be a member of the School Committee.

June [1845].

One who wishes to refresh himself by contact with the bone and sinew of society must avoid what is called the respectable portion of his city or neighborhood with as much care as in Europe a good traveller avoids American and English people.

June 15.

Be an opener of doors for such as come after thee, and do not try to make the universe a blind alley.

March [1846].

I like man, but not men.

August [1847].

*The Superstitions of our Age:*

The fear of Catholicism;

The fear of pauperism;

The fear of immigration;

The fear of manufacturing interests;

The fear of radicalism or democracy;

And faith in the steam engine.

London, April [1848].

People here expect a revolution. There will be no revolution, none that deserves to be called so. There may be a scramble for money. But as all the people we see want the things we now have, and not better things, it is very certain that they will, under whatever change of forms, keep the old system. When I see changed men, I shall look for a changed world. Whoever is skilful in heaping money now will be skilful in heaping money again.

January, [1849].

. . . If a man is going to California, he announces it with some hesitation; because it is a confession that he has failed at home.

July [1853].

'Tis curious that Christianity, which is idealism, is sturdily defended by the brokers, and steadily attacked by the idealists.

August [1853].

If Socrates were here, we could go and talk with him; but Longfellow, we cannot go and talk with; there is a palace, and servants, and a row of bottles of different coloured wines, and wine glasses, and fine coats.

February 24 [1855].<sup>24</sup>

Whatever transcendent abilities Fichte, Kant, Schelling, and Hegel have shown, I think they lack the confirmation of having given piggy a transit to the field. The log is very crooked, but still leaves Grumpy on the same side of the fence he was before.<sup>25</sup> If they had made the transit, common fame would have found it out. So I abide by my rule of not reading the book, until I hear of it through the newspapers.

July [1855].

. . . if the women demand votes, offices, political equality, as an Elder and Elderess are of equal power in the Shaker Families, refuse it not. 'Tis cheap wit that finds it so funny. Certainly all my points would be sooner carried in the state if women voted.

April [1859].

I have been writing and speaking what were once called novelties, for twenty-five or thirty years, and have not now one disciple. Why? Not that what I said was not true; nor that it has not found intelligent receivers; but because it did not go from any wish in me to bring men to me, but to themselves. I delight in driving them from me. What could I do, if they came to me?—they would interrupt and encumber me. This is my boast that I have no school follower. I should account it a measure of impurity of insight, if it did not create independence.

March [1862]

Why has never the poorest country college offered me a professorship of rhetoric? I think I could have taught an orator, though I am none.

May 24 [1864].

Yesterday, May 23, we buried Hawthorne in Sleepy Hollow, in a pomp of sunshine and verdure, and gentle winds. James Freeman Clarke read the service in the church and at the grave. Longfellow, Lowell, Holmes, Agassiz, Hoar, Dwight, Whipple, Norton, Alcott, Hillard, Fields, Judge Thomas, and I attended the hearse as pallbearers. Franklin Pierce was with

the family. The church was copiously decorated with white flowers delicately arranged. The corpse was unwillingly shown,—only a few moments to this company of his friends. But it was noble and serene in its aspect,—nothing amiss,—a calm and powerful head. A large company filled the church and the grounds of the cemetery. All was so bright and quiet that pain or mourning was hardly suggested, and Holmes said to me that it looked like a happy meeting.

Clarke said in the church that Hawthorne had done more justice than any other to the shades of life, shown a sympathy with the crime in our nature, and, like Jesus, was a friend of sinners.

I thought there was a tragic element in the event, that might be more fully rendered,—in the painful solitude of the man, which, I suppose, could no longer be endured, and he died of it.

I have found in his death a surprise and disappointment. I thought him a greater man than any of his works betray, that there was still a great deal of work in him, and that he might one day show a purer power. Moreover, I felt sure of him in his neighbourhood, and in his necessities of sympathy and intelligence,—that I could well wait his time,—his unwillingness and caprice,—and might one day conquer a friendship. It would have been a happiness, doubtless, to both of us, to have come into habits of unreserved intercourse. It was easy to talk with him,—there were no barriers,—only he said so little, that I talked too much, and stopped only because, as he gave no indications, I feared to exceed. He showed no signs of egotism or self-assertion, rather a humility, and, at one time, a fear that he had written himself out. One day, when I found him on the top of his hill, in the woods, he paced back the path to his house, and said, "*This path is the only remembrance of me that will remain.*" Now it appears that I waited too long.

Lately he had removed himself the more by the indignation his perverse politics and unfortunate friendship for that paltry Franklin Pierce awakened, though it rather moved pity for Hawthorne, and the

<sup>24</sup> At various times in his life Emerson told himself he would read no more metaphysical books. The following entry was prompted at one of those moments.

<sup>25</sup> This refers to the old story of the pig that sought access to a field by crawling through a hollow log that seemed to pass under the fence, only to find that the log was twisted and that the exit lay on the same side of the fence from which it had started. Thus philosophy seemed to Emerson to return too often

back to its starting point. Emerson had been disappointed, about 1836-39, by his inability successfully to apply the Kantian distinction between Understanding and Reason to his problem of identifying Matter and Mind. During the fifties his friends in St. Louis, led by the Hegelian, William Torrey Harris, were urging him to resume his studies of the German transcendentalists by studying Hegel. Emerson made several half-hearted attempts to master the Hegelian dialectic, but with little success.

assured belief that he would outlive it, and come right at last.

Concord, February 13, [1865].

Home from Chicago and Milwaukee. Chicago grows so fast that one ceases to respect civic growth: as if all these solid and stately squares which we are wont to see as the slow growth of a century had come to be done by machinery as cloth and hardware are made, and were therefore shoddy architecture without honour.

'Twas tedious, the squalor and obstructions of travel; the advantage of their offers at Chicago made it necessary to go; in short, this dragging of a decorous old gentleman out of home and out of posi-

tion to this juvenile career was tantamount to this,—“I’ll bet you fifty dollars a day that you will not leave your library, and wade and ride and run and suffer all manner of indignities and stand up for an hour each night reading in a hall”; and I answered, “I’ll bet I will.” I do it and win the \$900.

November 5.

We hoped that in the peace, after such a war, a great expansion would follow in the mind of the Country; grand views in every direction,—true freedom in politics, in religion, in social science, in thought. But the energy of the nation, and every interest is found as sectional and timorous as before. . . .

### *Emerson's First Letter to Carlyle*<sup>26</sup>

Boston, Massachusetts, 14 May, 1834.

My Dear Sir,—There are some purposes which we delay long to execute simply because we have them more at heart than others, and such an one has been for many weeks, I may say months, my design of writing you an epistle.

Some chance wind of Fame blew your name to me, perhaps two years ago, as the author of papers which I had already distinguished (as indeed it was very easy to do) from the mass of English periodical criticism as by far the most original and profound essays of the day,—the works of a man of Faith as well as Intellect, sportive as well as learned, and who, belonging to the despairing and deriding class of philosophers, was not ashamed to hope and to speak sincerely. Like somebody in *Wilhelm Meister*,<sup>27</sup> I said: This person has come under obligations to me and to all whom he has enlightened. He knows not how deeply I should grieve at his fall, if, in that exposed England where genius always hears the Devil’s whisper, “All these kingdoms will I give thee,” his virtue also should be an initial growth put off with age. When therefore I found myself in Europe, I went to your house only to say, “Faint not,—the word you utter is heard, though in the ends of the earth and by humblest men; it works, prevails.” Drawn by strong regard to one of my teachers I went

to see his person, and as he might say his environment at Craigenputtock. Yet it was to fulfil my duty, finish my mission, not with much hope of gratifying him,—in the spirit of “If I love you, what is that to you?” Well, it happened to me that I was delighted with my visit, justified to myself in my respect, and many a time upon the sea in my homeward voyage I remembered with joy the favored condition of my lonely philosopher, his happiest wedlock, his steadfast simplicity, his all means of happiness;—not that I had the remotest hope that he should so far depart from his theories as to expect happiness. On my arrival at home I rehearsed to several attentive ears what I had seen and heard, and they with joy received it.

In Liverpool I wrote to Mr. Fraser to send me his Magazine, and I have now received four numbers of the *Sartor Resartus*,<sup>28</sup> for whose light thanks evermore. I am glad that one living scholar is self-centred, and will be true to himself though none ever were before; who, as Montaigne<sup>29</sup> says, “puts his ear close by himself, and holds his breath and listens.” And none can be offended with the self-subsistency of one so catholic and jocund. And ’tis good to have a new eye inspect our mouldy social forms, our politics, and schools, and religion. I say *our*, for it cannot have escaped you that a lecture

<sup>26</sup> The preserved letters that passed between Carlyle and Emerson form two good-sized volumes, published in 1882.

<sup>27</sup> Goethe’s novel by that name, which Carlyle had translated and published in 1824.

<sup>28</sup> Carlyle’s *Sartor Resartus*, first published in installments in *Fraser’s Magazine*, appeared in book form in New York in 1836 and in London in 1838.

<sup>29</sup> Michel Montaigne (1533–92), French philosophical essayist.

upon these topics written for England may be read in America. Evermore thanks for the brave stand you have made for Spiritualism in these writings. But has literature any parallel to the oddity of the vehicle you have chosen to convey this treasure? I delight in the contents; the form, which my defective apprehension for a joke makes me not appreciate, I leave to your merry discretion. And yet did ever wise and philanthropic author use so defying a diction? As if society were not sufficiently shy of truth without providing it beforehand with an objection to the form. Can it be that this humor proceeds from a despair of finding a contemporary audience, and so the Prophet feels at liberty to utter his message in droll sounds. Did you not tell me, Mr. Thomas Carlyle, sitting upon one of your broad hills, that it was Jesus Christ built Dunscore Kirk yonder?<sup>30</sup> If you love such sequences, then admit, as you will, that no poet is sent into the world before his time; that all the departed thinkers and actors have paved your way; that (at least when you surrender yourself) nations and ages do guide your pen, yes, and common goose-quills as well as your diamond graver. Believe then that harp and car are formed by one revolution of the wheel; that men are waiting to hear your epical song; and so be pleased to skip those excursive involved glees, and give us the simple air, without the volley of variations. At least in some of your prefaces you should give us the theory of your rhetoric. I comprehend not why you should lavish in that spend-thrift style of yours celestial truths. Bacon and Plato have something too solid to say than that they can afford to be humorists. You are dispensing that which is rarest, namely, the simplest truths,—truths which lie next to consciousness, and which only the Platons and Goethes perceive. I look for the hour with impatience when the vehicle will be worthy of the spirit,—when the word will be as simple, and so as resistless, as the thought,—and, in short, when your words will be one with things. I have no hope that you will find suddenly a large audience. Says not the sarcasm, "Truth hath the plague in his house?" Yet all men are *potentially* (as Mr. Coleridge would say) your audience, and if you will not in very Mephistophelem<sup>31</sup> repel and defy them, shall be actually; and whatever the great or the small may say about

the charm of diabolism, a true and majestic genius can afford to despise it.

I venture to amuse you with this homiletic criticism because it is the sense of uncritical truth-seekers, to whom you are no more than Hecuba,<sup>32</sup> whose instincts assure them that there is Wisdom in this grotesque Teutonic apocalyptic strain of yours, but that 'tis hence hindered in its effect. And though with all my heart I would stand well with my Poet, yet if I offend I shall quietly retreat into my universal relations, wherefrom I affectionately espy you as a man, myself as another.

And yet before I come to the end of my letter I may repent of my temerity and unsay my charge. For are not all our circlets of will as so many little eddies rounded in by the great Circle of Necessity, and *could* the Truth-speaker, perhaps now the best Thinker of the Saxon race, have written otherwise? And must not we say that Drunkenness is a virtue rather than that Cato has erred?

I wish I could gratify you with any pleasing news of the regeneration, education, prospects, of man on this continent. But your philanthropy is so patient, so far-sighted, that present evils give you less solicitude. In the last six years government in the United States has been fast becoming a job, like great charities. A most unfit person in the Presidency<sup>33</sup> has been doing the worst things; the worse he grew, the more popular. Now things seem to mend. Webster,<sup>34</sup> a good man and as strong as if he were a sinner, begins to find himself the centre of a great and enlarging party and his eloquence incarnated and enacted by them; yet men dare not hope that the majority shall be suddenly unseated. I send herewith a volume of Webster's that you may see his speech on Foot's Resolution, a speech which Americans have never done praising. I have great doubts whether the book reaches you, as I know not my agents. I shall put with it the little book of my Swedenborgian druggist,<sup>35</sup> of whom I told you. And if, which is hardly to be hoped, any good book should be thrown out of our vortex of trade and politics, I shall not fail to give it the same direction.

I need not tell you, my dear sir, what pleasure a

<sup>32</sup> The wife of Priam and mother of Hector in the *Iliad*.

<sup>33</sup> Andrew Jackson (1767–1845), seventh President of the United States (1829–37).

<sup>34</sup> Daniel Webster (1782–1852).

<sup>35</sup> Sampson Reed's *Observations on the Growth of the Mind* (1825).

<sup>30</sup> A reference to their talk on the occasion of Emerson's visit to Carlyle at Craigenputtock in 1833.

<sup>31</sup> Mephistopheles is the diabolical tempter in Goethe's *Faust*.

letter from you would give me when you have a few moments to spare to so remote a friend. If any word in my letter should provoke you to a reply, I shall rejoice in my sauciness. I am spending the summer in the country, but my address is Boston, care of Barnard, Adams & Co. Care of O. Rich, London. Please to make my affectionate respects to Mrs. Car-

lyle, whose kindness I shall always gratefully remember. I depend upon her intercession to assure your writing to me. May God grant you both his best blessing.

Your friend,  
R. Waldo Emerson.

*To the Reverend Henry Ware, Jr.*<sup>36</sup>

Concord, October 8, 1838.

My dear Sir.—I ought sooner to have acknowledged your kind letter of last week, and the Sermon it accompanied. The letter was right manly and noble. The Sermon, too, I have read with attention. If it assails any doctrines of mine, perhaps I am not so quick to see it as writers generally—certainly I did not feel any disposition to depart from my habitual contentment that you should say your thought, whilst I say mine.

I believe I must tell you what I think of my new position. It strikes me very oddly that good and wise men at Cambridge and Boston should think of raising me into an object of criticism. I have always been, from my very incapacity of methodical writing, “a chartered libertine,” free to worship and free to rail; lucky when I could make myself understood, but never esteemed near enough to the institutions and mind of society to deserve the notice of the masters of literature and religion. I have appreciated fully the advantage of my position; for I well know that there is no scholar less willing or less able to be a polemic. I could not give account of myself, if challenged. I could not possibly give you one of the “arguments” you cruelly hint at, on which any doctrine of mine

stands. For I do not know what arguments mean in reference to any expression of a thought. I delight in telling what I think, but if you ask how I dare say so, or why it is so, I am the most helpless of mortal men. I do not even see that either of these questions admits of an answer. So that, in the present droll posture of my affairs, when I see myself suddenly raised into the importance of a heretic, I am very uneasy when I advert to the supposed duties of such a personage, who is expected to make good his thesis against all comers.

I certainly shall do no such thing. I shall read what you and other good men write, as I have always done,—glad when you speak my thought, and skipping the page that has nothing for me. I shall go on, just as before, seeing whatever I can, and telling what I see; and, I suppose, with the same fortune that has hitherto attended me,—the joy of finding that my abler and better brothers, who work with the sympathy of society, loving and beloved, do now and then unexpectedly confirm my perceptions, and find my nonsense is only their own thought in motley. And so

Your affectionate servant,  
R. W. Emerson.

*Nature*<sup>37</sup>

A subtle chain of countless rings  
The next unto the farthest brings;  
The eye reads omens where it goes,  
And speaks all languages the rose;

And, striving to be man, the worm  
Mounts through all the spires of form.

Introduction

Our age is retrospective. It builds the sepulchres of the fathers. It writes biographies, histories, and criti-

<sup>36</sup> Written in reply to Henry Ware's request for the reasons or “arguments” on the strength of which Emerson had brought his charges against the theology and theologians of contemporary Unitarians.

<sup>37</sup> Published anonymously in September, 1836, in an edition of 500 copies. It attracted little attention at the time and was not reprinted until 1849. At that time the motto in verse was sub-

stituted for the following prose sentence from Plotinus, “Nature is but an image or imitation of wisdom, the last thing of the soul; Nature being a thing which doth only do, but not know,” which stood at the head of *Nature* as published in 1836.

cism. The foregoing generations beheld God and nature face to face; we, through their eyes. Why should not we also enjoy an original relation to the universe? Why should not we have a poetry and philosophy of insight and not of tradition, and a religion by revelation to us, and not the history of theirs? Embosomed for a season in nature, whose floods of life stream around and through us, and invite us, by the powers they supply, to action proportioned to nature, why should we grope among the dry bones of the past, or put the living generation into masquerade out of its faded wardrobe? The sun shines to-day also. There is more wool and flax in the fields. There are new lands, new men, new thoughts. Let us demand our own works and laws and worship.

Undoubtedly we have no questions to ask which are unanswerable.<sup>38</sup> We must trust the perfection of the creation so far as to believe that whatever curiosity the order of things has awakened in our minds, the order of things can satisfy. Every man's condition is a solution in hieroglyphic to those inquiries he would put. He acts it as life, before he apprehends it as truth. In like manner, nature is already, in its forms and tendencies, describing its own design. Let us interrogate the great apparition that shines so peacefully around us. Let us inquire, to what end is nature?

All science has one aim, namely, to find a theory of nature. We have theories of races and of functions, but scarcely yet a remote approach to an idea of creation. We are now so far from the road to truth, that religious teachers dispute and hate each other, and speculative men are esteemed unsound and frivolous. But to a sound judgment, the most abstract truth is the most practical. Whenever a true theory appears, it will be its own evidence. Its test is, that it will explain all phenomena. Now many are thought not only unexplained but inexplicable; as language, sleep, madness, dreams, beasts, sex.

Philosophically considered, the universe is composed of Nature and the Soul. Strictly speaking, therefore, all that is separate from us, all which Philosophy distinguishes as the NOT ME, that is, both nature and art, all other men and my own body, must be ranked under this name, NATURE. In enumerating the values of nature and casting up their sum,

I shall use the word in both senses;—in its common and in its philosophical import. In inquiries so general as our present one, the inaccuracy is not material; no confusion of thought will occur. *Nature*, in the common sense, refers to essences unchanged by man; space, the air, the river, the leaf. *Art* is applied to the mixture of his will with the same things, as in a house, a canal, a statue, a picture. But his operations taken together are so insignificant, a little chipping, baking, patching, and washing, that in an impression so grand as that of the world on the human mind, they do not vary the result.

### I. Nature

To go into solitude, a man needs to retire as much from his chamber as from society. I am not solitary whilst I read and write, though nobody is with me. But if a man would be alone, let him look at the stars. The rays that come from those heavenly worlds will separate between him and what he touches. One might think the atmosphere was made transparent with this design, to give man, in the heavenly bodies, the perpetual presence of the sublime. Seen in the streets of cities, how great they are! If the stars should appear one night in a thousand years, how would men believe and adore; and preserve for many generations the remembrance of the city of God which had been shown! But every night come out these envoys of beauty, and light the universe with their admonishing smile.

The stars awaken a certain reverence, because though always present, they are inaccessible; but all natural objects make a kindred impression, when the mind is open to their influence. Nature never wears a mean appearance. Neither does the wisest man extort her secret, and lose his curiosity by finding out all her perfection. Nature never became a toy to a wise spirit. The flowers, the animals, the mountains, reflected the wisdom of his best hour, as much as they had delighted the simplicity of his childhood.

When we speak of nature in this manner, we have a distinct but most poetical sense in the mind. We mean the integrity of impression made by manifold natural objects. It is this which distinguishes the stick of timber of the wood-cutter from the tree of the poet. The charming landscape which I saw this morning is indubitably made up of some twenty or thirty farms. Miller owns this field, Locke that, and Man-

<sup>38</sup> An extraordinary assumption, which Emerson had numerous occasions to doubt before he finished writing *Nature*, so full of unanswered questions.

ning the woodland beyond. But none of them owns the landscape. There is a property in the horizon which no man has but he whose eye can integrate all the parts, that is, the poet. This is the best part of these men's farms, yet to this their warranty-deeds give no title.

To speak truly, few adult persons can see nature. Most persons do not see the sun. At least they have a very superficial seeing. The sun illuminates only the eye of the man, but shines into the eye and the heart of the child. The lover of nature is he whose inward and outward senses are still truly adjusted to each other; who has retained the spirit of infancy even into the era of manhood. His intercourse with heaven and earth becomes part of his daily food. In the presence of nature a wild delight runs through the man, in spite of real sorrows. Nature says,—he is my creature, and maugre<sup>39</sup> all his impertinent griefs, he shall be glad with me. Not the sun or the summer alone, but every hour and season yields its tribute of delight; for every hour and change corresponds to and authorizes a different state of the mind, from breathless noon to grimmest midnight. Nature is a setting that fits equally well a comic or a mourning piece. In good health, the air is a cordial of incredible virtue. Crossing a bare common, in snow puddles, at twilight, under a clouded sky, without having in my thoughts any occurrence of special good fortune, I have enjoyed a perfect exhilaration. I am glad to the brink of fear. In the woods, too, a man casts off his years, as the snake his slough,<sup>40</sup> and at what period soever of life, is always a child. In the woods is perpetual youth. Within these plantations of God, a decorum and sanctity reign, a perennial festival is dressed, and the guest sees not how he should tire of them in a thousand years. In the woods, we return to reason and faith. There I feel that nothing can befall me in life,—no disgrace, no calamity (leaving me my eyes), which nature cannot repair. Standing on the bare ground,—my head bathed by the blithe<sup>40</sup>

air, and uplifted into infinite space,—all mean egotism vanishes. I become a transparent eyeball; I am nothing; I see all; the currents of the Universal Being circulate through me; I am part or parcel<sup>41</sup> of God. The name of the nearest friend sounds then foreign and accidental: to be brothers, to be acquaintances,—master or servant, is then a trifle and a disturbance. I am the lover of uncontained and immortal beauty. In the wilderness, I find something more dear and connate<sup>42</sup> than in streets or villages. In the tranquil landscape, and especially in the distant line of the horizon, man beholds somewhat as beautiful as his own nature.

The greatest delight which the fields and woods minister is the suggestion of an occult relation between man and the vegetable. I am not alone and unacknowledged. They nod to me, and I to them. The waving of the boughs in the storm is new to me and old. It takes me by surprise, and yet is not unknown. Its effect is like that of a higher thought or a better emotion coming over me, when I deemed I was thinking justly or doing right.

Yet it is certain that the power to produce this delight does not reside in nature, but in man, or in a harmony of both. It is necessary to use these pleasures with great temperance. For nature is not always tricked in holiday attire, but the same scene which yesterday breathed perfume and glittered as for the frolic of the nymphs, is overspread with melancholy to-day. Nature always wears the colors of the spirit. To a man laboring under calamity, the heat of his own fire hath sadness in it. Then there is a kind of contempt of the landscape felt by him who has just lost by death a dear friend. The sky is less grand as it shuts down over less worth in the population.

## II. Commodity<sup>43</sup>

Whoever considers the final cause of the world will discern a multitude of uses that enter as parts into that result. They all admit of being thrown into

ing and (2) of Reason. As Reason is not applicable to the relatively low, because primarily materialistic, use of Nature in terms of Commodity, so Sensation is of no use in contemplating the higher, because idealistic, uses of Nature as Discipline. The symmetry of this 1,2; 1,2,3; 1,2,3; 1,2 arrangement of Emerson's is striking. As a matter of fact, the oft-repeated criticism of Emerson's formlessness and orderliness is often overdone. What the reader often misses is that Emerson does not usually avail himself of the common connecting and transitional devices between sentences and between paragraphs. The result is that the reader who depends upon these aids to reading fails to recognize the connection between the bare thoughts, barely stated.

<sup>39</sup> Despite.

<sup>40</sup> Outer skin.

<sup>41</sup> Particle.

<sup>42</sup> Congenial.

<sup>43</sup> Beginning with "Commodity," the student will discover Emerson's attempt to apply the Kantian tri-partition of the human mind into Sensation, Understanding, and Reason to the uses of Nature. Commodity is viewed in terms (1) of Sensation and (2) of Understanding. Beauty is considered in terms of (1) Sensation, (2) Understanding, and (3) Reason. Language, also, is contemplated in relation to (1) Sensation, (2) Understanding, and (3) Reason. Discipline is the object (1) of Understand-



one of the following classes: Commodity; Beauty; Language; and Discipline.

Under the general name of commodity, I rank all those advantages which our senses owe to nature. This, of course, is a benefit which is temporary and mediate, not ultimate, like its service to the soul. Yet although low, it is perfect in its kind, and is the only use of nature which all men apprehend. The misery of man appears like childish petulance, when we explore the steady and prodigal provision that has been made for his support and delight on this green ball which floats him through the heavens. What angels invented these splendid ornaments, these rich conveniences, this ocean of air above, this ocean of water beneath, this firmament of earth between? this zodiac of lights, this tent of dropping clouds, this striped coat of climates, this fourfold year? Beasts, fire, water, stones, and corn serve him. The field is at once his floor, his work-yard, his play-ground, his garden, and his bed.

"More servants wait on man  
Than he'll take notice of." <sup>44</sup>

Nature, in its ministry to man, is not only the material, but is also the process and the result. All the parts incessantly work into each other's hands for the profit of man. The wind sows the seed; the sun evaporates the sea; the wind blows the vapor to the field; the ice, on the other side of the planet, condenses rain on this; the rain feeds the plant; the plant <sup>30</sup> feeds the animal; and thus the endless circulations of the divine charity nourish man.

The useful arts are reproductions or new combinations by the wit of man, of the same natural benefactors. He no longer waits for favoring gales, but by means of steam, he realizes the fable of Æolus's bag, and carries the two and thirty winds in the boiler of his boat.<sup>45</sup> To diminish friction, he paves the road with iron bars, and, mounting a coach with a ship-load of men, animals, and merchandise behind him, he <sup>40</sup> darts through the country, from town to town, like an eagle or a swallow through the air. By the aggregate of these aids, how is the face of the world changed, from the era of Noah to that of Napoleon! The pri-

vate poor man hath cities, ships, canals, bridges, built for him. He goes to the post-office, and the human race run on his errands; to the book-shop, and the human race read and write of all that happens, for him; to the court-house, and nations repair his wrongs. He sets his house upon the road, and the human race go forth every morning, and shovel out the snow, and cut a path for him.

But there is no need of specifying particulars in this class of uses. The catalogue is endless, and the examples so obvious, that I shall leave them to the reader's reflection, with the general remark, that this mercenary benefit is one which has respect to a farther good. A man is fed, not that he may be fed, but that he may work.

### III. Beauty

A nobler want of man is served by nature, namely, the love of Beauty.

<sup>20</sup> The ancient Greeks called the world κόσμος,<sup>46</sup> beauty. Such is the constitution of all things, or such the plastic power of the human eye, that the primary forms, as the sky, the mountain, the tree, the animal, give us a delight *in and for themselves*; a pleasure arising from outline, color, motion, and grouping. This seems partly owing to the eye itself. The eye is the best of artists. By the mutual action of its structure and of the laws of light, perspective is produced, which integrates every mass of objects, of what character soever, into a well colored and shaded globe, so that where the particular objects are mean and unaffecting, the landscape which they compose is round and symmetrical. And as the eye is the best composer, so light is the first of painters. There is no object so foul that intense light will not make beautiful. And the stimulus it affords to the sense, and a sort of infinitude which it hath, like space and time, make all matter gay. Even the corpse has its own beauty. But besides this general grace diffused <sup>30</sup> over nature, almost all the individual forms are agreeable to the eye, as is proved by our endless imitations of some of them, as the acorn, the grape, the pine-cone, the wheat-ear, the egg, the wings and forms of most birds, the lion's claw, the serpent, the butterfly, sea-shells, flames, clouds, buds, leaves, and the forms of many trees, as the palm.

For better consideration, we may distribute the aspects of Beauty in a threefold manner.

<sup>46</sup> *Kosmos*, meaning harmonious order.

<sup>44</sup> Quoted from a poem "Man," by George Herbert (1593-1633), an English poet and divine.

<sup>45</sup> Until 1838, when the *Sirius* and *Great Western* crossed the Atlantic entirely under steam power, steamboats relied upon sails for auxiliary power. Æolus, in Greek mythology, kept the winds in a bag.

1. First, the simple perception of natural forms is a delight. The influence of the forms and actions in nature is so needful to man, that, in its lowest functions, it seems to lie on the confines of commodity and beauty. To the body and mind which have been cramped by noxious work or company, nature is medicinal and restores their tone. The tradesman, the attorney comes out of the din and craft of the street and sees the sky and the woods, and is a man again. In their eternal calm, he finds himself. The health of the eye seems to demand a horizon. We are never tired, so long as we can see far enough.

But in other hours, Nature satisfies by its loveliness, and without any mixture of corporeal benefit. I see the spectacle of morning from the hilltop over against my house, from daybreak to sunrise, with emotions which an angel might share. The long slender bars of cloud float like fishes in the sea of crimson light. From the earth, as a shore, I look out into that silent sea. I seem to partake its rapid transformations; the active enchantment reaches my dust, and I dilate and conspire with the morning wind. How does Nature deify us with a few and cheap elements! Give me health and a day, and I will make the pomp of emperors ridiculous. The dawn is my Assyria;<sup>47</sup> the sunset and moonrise my Paphos,<sup>48</sup> and unimaginable realms of faerie; broad noon shall be my England of the senses and the understanding; the night shall be my Germany of mystic philosophy and dreams.

Not less excellent, except for our less susceptibility in the afternoon, was the charm, last evening of a January sunset. The western clouds divided and subdivided themselves into pink flakes modulated with tints of unspeakable softness, and the air had so much life and sweetness that it was a pain to come within doors. What was it that nature would say? Was there no meaning in the live repose of the valley behind the mill, and which Homer or Shakespeare could not re-form for me in words? The leafless trees become spires of flame in the sunset, with the blue cast for their background, and the stars of the dead calices<sup>49</sup> of flowers, and every withered stem and stubble rimed with frost, contribute something to the mute music.

The inhabitants of cities suppose that the country

<sup>47</sup> Assyria is here used to designate oriental splendor.

<sup>48</sup> A city in Cyprus, noted in classical times for its Aphrodite cultists.

<sup>49</sup> The cups of flowers.

landscape is pleasant only half the year. I please myself with the graces of the winter scenery, and believe that we are as much touched by it as by the genial influences of summer. To the attentive eye, each moment of the year has its own beauty, and in the same field, it beholds, every hour, a picture which was never seen before, and which shall never be seen again. The heavens change every moment, and reflect their glory or gloom on the plains beneath. The state of the crop in the surrounding farms alters the expression of the earth from week to week. The succession of native plants in the pastures and roadsides, which makes the silent clock by which time tells the summer hours, will make even the divisions of the day sensible to a keen observer. The tribes of birds and insects, like the plants punctual to their time, follow each other, and the year has room for all. By water-courses, the variety is greater. In July, the blue pontederia or pickerel-weed blooms in large beds in the shallow parts of our pleasant river,<sup>50</sup> and swarms with yellow butterflies in continual motion. Art cannot rival this pomp of purple and gold. Indeed the river is a perpetual gala, and boasts each month a new ornament.

But this beauty of Nature which is seen and felt as beauty, is the least part. The shows of day, the dewy morning, the rainbow, mountains, orchards in blossom, stars, moonlight, shadows in still water, and the like, if too eagerly hunted, become shows merely, and mock us with their unreality. Go out of the house to see the moon, and 't is mere tinsel; it will not please as when its light shines upon your necessary journey. The beauty that shimmers in the yellow afternoons of October, who ever could clutch it? Go forth to find it, and it is gone; 't is only a mirage as you look from the windows of diligence.

2. The presence of a higher, namely, of the spiritual element is essential to its perfection. The high and divine beauty which can be loved without effeminacy, is that which is found in combination with the human will. Beauty is the mark God sets upon virtue. Every natural action is graceful. Every heroic act is also decent, and causes the place and the bystanders to shine. We are taught by great actions that the universe is the property of every individual in it. Every rational creature has all nature for his dowry and estate. It is his, if he will. He may divest himself of it; he may creep into a corner, and abdicate his

<sup>50</sup> The Concord River.

kingdom, as most men do, but he is entitled to the world by his constitution. In proportion to the energy of his thought and will, he takes up the world into himself. "All those things for which men plough, build, or sail, obey virtue;" said Sallust.<sup>51</sup> "The winds and waves," said Gibbon, "are always on the side of the ablest navigators."<sup>52</sup> So are the sun and moon and all the stars of heaven. When a noble act is done,—perchance in a scene of great natural beauty; when Leonidas<sup>53</sup> and his three hundred martyrs consume one day in dying, and the sun and moon come each and look at them once in the steep defile of Thermopylæ; when Arnold Winkelried,<sup>54</sup> in the high Alps, under the shadow of the avalanche, gathers in his side a sheaf of Austrian spears to break the line for his comrades; are not these heroes entitled to add the beauty of the scene to the beauty of the deed? When the bark of Columbus nears the shore of America;—before it, the beach lined with savages, fleeing out of all their huts of cane; the sea behind; and the purple mountains of the Indian Archipelago around, can we separate the man from the living picture? Does not the New World clothe his form with her palm-groves and savannahs as fit drapery? Ever does natural beauty steal in like air, and envelope great actions. When Sir Harry Vane<sup>55</sup> was dragged up the Tower-hill, sitting on a sled, to suffer death as the champion of the English laws, one of the multitude cried out to him, "You never sate on so glorious a seat!" Charles II., to intimidate the citizens of London, caused the patriot Lord Russell<sup>56</sup> to be drawn in an open coach through the principal streets of the city on his way to the scaffold. "But," his biographer says, "the multitude imagined they saw liberty and virtue sitting by his side." In private places, among sordid objects, an act of truth or heroism seems at once to draw to itself the sky as its temple, the sun as its candle. Nature stretches out her arms to embrace man, only let his thoughts be of equal greatness. Willingly does she follow his steps<sup>40</sup>

<sup>51</sup> From *The Conspiracy of Catiline*, chap. ii. by Caius Sallustius Crispus (86–34 B.C.), a Roman historian.

<sup>52</sup> From *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, chap. lxviii. by Edward Gibbon (1737–1794).

<sup>53</sup> Leonidas, King of Sparta, defended the pass of Thermopyla with a small army.

<sup>54</sup> Winkelried, at the Battle of Sempach (1386), gathered so many Austrian spears in his breast that the enemy's concentration upon him made a breach in the Austrian ranks, thus enabling his Swiss compatriots to triumph.

<sup>55</sup> Sir Henry Vane (1613–62), executed for treason by order of Charles II.

with the rose and the violet, and bend her lines of grandeur and grace to the decoration of her darling child. Only let his thoughts be of equal scope, and the frame will suit the picture. A virtuous man is in unison with her works, and makes the central figure of the visible sphere. Homer, Pindar, Socrates, Phocion,<sup>57</sup> associate themselves fitly in our memory with the geography and climate of Greece. The visible heavens and earth sympathize with Jesus. And in common life whosoever has seen a person of powerful character and happy genius, will have remarked how easily he took all things along with him,—the persons, the opinions, and the day, and nature became ancillary to a man.

3. There is still another aspect under which the beauty of the world may be viewed, namely, as it becomes an object of the intellect. Beside the relation of things to virtue, they have a relation to thought. The intellect searches out the absolute order of things as they stand in the mind of God, and without the colors of affection. The intellectual and the active powers seem to succeed each other, and the exclusive activity of the one generates the exclusive activity of the other. There is something unfriendly in each to the other, but they are like the alternate periods of feeding and working in animals; each prepares and will be followed by the other. Therefore does beauty, which, in relation to actions, as we have seen, comes unsought, and comes because it is unsought, remain for the apprehension and pursuit of the intellect; and then again, in its turn, of the active power. Nothing divine dies. All good is eternally re-productive. The beauty of nature re-forms itself in the mind, and not for barren contemplation, but for new creation.

All men are in some degree impressed by the face of the world; some men even to delight. This love of beauty is Taste. Others have the same love in such excess, that, not content with admiring, they seek to embody it in new forms. The creation of beauty is Art.

The production of a work of art throws a light upon the mystery of humanity. A work of art is an abstract or epitome of the world. It is the result or expression of nature, in miniature. For although the

<sup>56</sup> William, Lord Russell (1639–83), executed for alleged treason.

<sup>57</sup> Homer, author of the *Iliad*; Pindar (522–443 B.C.), a Greek lyric poet; Socrates (470?–399 B.C.); Phocion (402–318 B.C.), Athenian general and statesman.

works of nature are innumerable and all different, the result or the expression of them all is similar and single. Nature is a sea of forms radically alike and even unique. A leaf, a sunbeam, a landscape, the ocean, make an analogous impression on the mind. What is common to them all,—that perfectness and harmony, is beauty. The standard of beauty is the entire circuit of natural forms,—the totality of nature; which the Italians expressed by defining beauty “il più nell’ uno.”<sup>58</sup> Nothing is quite beautiful alone; nothing but is beautiful in the whole. A single object is only so far beautiful as it suggests this universal grace. The poet, the painter, the sculptor, the musician, the architect, seek each to concentrate this radiance of the world on one point, and each in his several work to satisfy the love of beauty which stimulates him to produce. Thus is Art a nature passed through the alembic of man. Thus in art does Nature work through the will of a man filled with the beauty of her first works.

The world thus exists to the soul to satisfy the desire of beauty. This element I call an ultimate end. No reason can be asked or given why the soul seeks beauty. Beauty, in its largest and profoundest sense, is one expression for the universe. God is the all-fair. Truth, and goodness, and beauty, are but different faces of the same All. But beauty in nature is not ultimate. It is the herald of inward and eternal beauty, and is not alone a solid and satisfactory good. It must stand as a part, and not as yet the 30 last or highest expression of the final cause of Nature.

#### IV. Language

Language is a third use which Nature subserves to man. Nature is the vehicle of thought, and in a simple, double, and three-fold degree.

1. Words are signs of natural facts.
2. Particular natural facts are symbols of particular spiritual facts.
3. Nature is the symbol of spirit.

1. Words are signs of natural facts. The use of natural history is to give us aid in supernatural history; the use of the outer creation, to give us language for the beings and changes of the inward creation. Every word which is used to express a moral or intellectual fact, if traced to its root, is found to be borrowed from some material appearance. Right

<sup>58</sup> “Many in one.”

means *straight*; *wrong* means *twisted*. *Spirit* primarily means *wind*; *transgression*, the crossing of a *line*; *supercilious*, the *raising of the eyebrow*. We say the *heart* to express emotion, the *head* to denote thought; and *thought* and *emotion* are words borrowed from sensible things, and now appropriated to spiritual nature. Most of the process by which this transformation is made, is hidden from us in the remote time when language was framed; but the same tendency may be daily observed in children. Children and savages use only nouns or names of things, which they convert into verbs, and apply to analogous mental acts.

2. But this origin of all words that convey a spiritual import,—so conspicuous a fact in the history of language,—is our least debt to nature. It is not words only that are emblematic; it is things which are emblematic. Every natural fact is a symbol of some spiritual fact. Every appearance in nature corresponds to some state of the mind, and that state of the mind can only be described by presenting that natural appearance as its picture. An enraged man is a lion, a cunning man is a fox, a firm man is a rock, a learned man is a torch. A lamb is innocence; a snake is subtle spite; flowers express to us the delicate affections. Light and darkness are our familiar expression for knowledge and ignorance; and heat for love. Visible distance behind and before us, is respectively our image of memory and hope.

Who looks upon a river in a meditative hour and is not reminded of the flux of all things? Throw a stone into the stream, and the circles that propagate themselves are the beautiful type of all influence. Man is conscious of a universal soul within or behind his individual life, wherein, as in a firmament, the natures of Justice, Truth, Love, Freedom, arise and shine. This universal soul he calls Reason: it is not mine, or thine, or his, but we are its; we are its property and men. And the blue sky in which the 40 private earth is buried, the sky with its eternal calm, and full of everlasting orbs, is the type of Reason. That which intellectually considered we call Reason, considered in relation to nature, we call Spirit. Spirit is the Creator. Spirit hath life in itself. And man in all ages and countries embodies it in his language as the FATHER.

It is easily seen that there is nothing lucky or capricious in these analogies, but that they are constant, and pervade nature. These are not the dreams

of a few poets, here and there, but man is an analogist, and studies relations in all objects. He is placed in the centre of beings, and a ray of relation passes from every other being to him. And neither can man be understood without these objects, nor these objects without man. All the facts in natural history taken by themselves, have no value, but are barren, like a single sex. But marry it to human history, and it is full of life. Whole floras,<sup>59</sup> all Linnæus' <sup>60</sup> and Buffon's <sup>61</sup> volumes, are dry catalogues of facts; but the most trivial of these facts, the habit of a plant, the organs, or work, or noise of an insect, applied to the illustration of a fact in intellectual philosophy, or in any way associated to human nature, affects us in the most lively and agreeable manner. The seed of a plant,—to what affecting analogies in the nature of man is that little fruit made use of, in all discourse, up to the voice of Paul, who calls the human corpse a seed,—“It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body.” <sup>62</sup> The motion of the earth round its axis and round the sun, makes the day and the year. These are certain amounts of brute light and heat. But is there no intent of an analogy between man's life and the seasons? And do the seasons gain no grandeur or pathos from the analogy? The instincts of the ant are very unimportant considered as the ant's; but the moment a ray of relation is seen to extend from it to man, and the little drudge is seen to be a monitor, a little body with a mighty heart, then all its habits, even that said to be recently observed, that it never sleeps, become sublime.

Because of this radical <sup>63</sup> correspondence between visible things and human thoughts, savages, who have only what is necessary, converse in figures. As we go back in history, language becomes more picturesque, until its infancy, when it is all poetry; <sup>64</sup> or all spiritual facts are represented by natural symbols. The same symbols are found to make the original elements of all languages. It has moreover been observed, that the idioms of all languages approach each other in passages of the greatest eloquence and power. And as this is the first language, so is it the

last. This immediate dependence of language upon nature, this conversion of an outward phenomenon into a type of somewhat in human life, never loses its power to affect us. It is this which gives that piquancy to the conversation of a strong-natured farmer or backwoodsman, which all men relish.

A man's power to connect his thought with its proper symbol, and so to utter it, depends on the simplicity of his character, that is, upon his love of truth and his desire to communicate it without loss. The corruption of man is followed by the corruption of language. When simplicity of character and the sovereignty of ideas is broken up by the prevalence of secondary desires,—the desire of riches, of pleasure, of power, and of praise,—and duplicity and falsehood take place of simplicity and truth, the power over nature as an interpreter of the will is in a degree lost; new imagery ceases to be created, and old words are perverted to stand for things which are not; a paper currency is employed, when there is no bullion in the vaults. In due time the fraud is manifest, and words lose all power to stimulate the understanding or the affections. Hundreds of writers may be found in every long-civilized nation who for a short time believe and make others believe that they see and utter truths, who do not of themselves clothe one thought in its natural garment, but who feed unconsciously on the language created by the primary writers of the country, those, namely, who hold primarily on nature.

But wise men pierce this rotten diction and fasten words again to visible things; so that picturesque language is at once a commanding certificate that he who employs it is a man in alliance with truth and God. The moment our discourse rises above the ground line of familiar facts and is inflamed with passion or exalted by thought, it clothes itself in images. A man conversing in earnest, if he watch his intellectual processes, will find that a material image more or less luminous arises in his mind, contemporaneous with every thought, which furnishes the vestment of the thought. Hence, good writing and brilliant discourse are perpetual allegories. This imagery is spontaneous. It is the blending of experience with the present action of the mind. It is proper creation. It is the working of the Original Cause through the instruments he has already made.

These facts may suggest the advantage which the country-life possesses, for a powerful mind, over the

<sup>59</sup> That is, the world of plants systematically treated.

<sup>60</sup> Linnæus (1707-78), the founder of the modern systematization of the genera and species in botany.

<sup>61</sup> Buffon (1707-88), a French naturalist, author of the *Natural History* which presented the first popular synthesis of the subject.

<sup>62</sup> See I Corinthians 15:14.

<sup>63</sup> That is, basic or fundamental.

<sup>64</sup> The favorite romantic theory of the origins of language.

artificial and curtailed life of cities. We know more from nature than we can at will communicate. Its light flows into the mind evermore, and we forget its presence. The poet, the orator, bred in the woods, whose senses have been nourished by their fair and appeasing changes, year after year, without design and without heed,—shall not lose their lesson altogether, in the roar of cities or the broil of politics. Long hereafter, amidst agitation and terror in national councils,—in the hour of revolution,—these solemn images shall reappear in their morning lustre, as fit symbols and words of the thoughts which the passing events shall awaken. At the call of a noble sentiment, again the woods wave, the pines murmur, the river rolls and shines, and the cattle low upon the mountains, as he saw and heard them in his infancy. And with these forms, the spells of persuasion, the keys of power are put into his hands.

3. We are thus assisted by natural objects in the expression of particular meanings. But how great a language to convey such pepper-corn informations! <sup>65</sup> Did it need such noble races of creatures, this profusion of forms, this host of orbs in heaven, to furnish man with the dictionary and grammar of his municipal <sup>66</sup> speech? Whilst we use this grand cipher to expedite the affairs of our pot and kettle, we feel that we have not yet put it to its use, neither are able. We are like travellers using the cinders of a volcano to roast their eggs. Whilst we see that it always stands ready to clothe what we would say, <sup>30</sup> we cannot avoid the question whether the characters are not significant of themselves. Have mountains, and waves, and skies, no significance but what we consciously give them when we employ them as emblems of our thoughts? The world is emblematic. Parts of speech are metaphors, because the whole of nature is a metaphor of the human mind. The laws of moral nature answer to those of matter as face to face in a glass. "The visible world and the relation of its parts, is the dial plate of the invisible." <sup>40</sup> The axioms of physics translate the laws of ethics. Thus, "the whole is greater than its part;" "reaction is equal to action;" "the smallest weight may be made to lift the greatest, the difference of weight being compensated by time;" and many the like propositions, which have an ethical as well as physical sense. These propositions have a much more extensive and

universal sense when applied to human life, than when confined to technical use.

In like manner, the memorable words of history and the proverbs of nations consist usually of a natural fact, selected as a picture or parable of a moral truth. Thus; A rolling stone gathers no moss; A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush; A cripple in the right way will beat a racer in the wrong; Make hay while the sun shines; 'T is hard to carry a full cup even; Vinegar is the son of wine; The last ounce broke the camel's back; Long-lived trees make roots first;—and the like. In their primary sense these are trivial facts, but we repeat them for the value of their analogical import. What is true of proverbs, is true of all fables, parables, and allegories.

This relation between the mind and matter is not fancied by some poet, but stands in the will of God, and so is free to be known by all men. It appears to men, or it does not appear. When in fortunate hours we ponder this miracle, the wise man doubts if at all other times he is not blind and deaf;

"Can such things be,  
And overcome us like a summer's cloud,  
Without our special wonder?" <sup>67</sup>

for the universe becomes transparent, and the light of higher laws than its own shines through it. It is the standing problem which has exercised the wonder and the study of every fine genius since the world began; from the era of the Egyptians and the Brahmins <sup>68</sup> to that of Pythagoras, <sup>69</sup> of Plato, <sup>70</sup> of Bacon, <sup>71</sup> of Leibnitz, <sup>72</sup> of Swedenborg. <sup>73</sup> There sits the Sphinx <sup>74</sup> at the roadside, and from age to age, as each prophet comes by, he tries his fortune at reading her riddle. There seems to be a necessity in spirit to manifest itself in material forms; and day and night, river and storm, beast and bird, acid and alkali, preëxist in necessary Ideas in the mind of God, and are what they are by virtue of preceding affections in the world of spirit. A Fact is the end or last issue

<sup>67</sup> Quoted from *Macbeth*, III, iv, 111-113.

<sup>68</sup> The ancient Egyptian and Indian seers were often regarded by the transcendentalists as possessed of unusual wisdom. Emerson and Thoreau both read the Indian philosophers and poets.

<sup>69</sup> Pythagoras (582-507? B.C.), a Greek philosopher, exponent of the transmigration and immortality of souls.

<sup>70</sup> Plato (428-348 B.C.), Greek philosopher.

<sup>71</sup> Francis Bacon (1561-1626), English philosopher.

<sup>72</sup> Gottfried Wilhelm von Leibnitz (1646-1716), German philosopher and mathematician.

<sup>73</sup> Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772), Swedish philosopher, whose mysticism interested Emerson.

<sup>74</sup> The Sphinx whose riddle Oedipus finally solved.

<sup>65</sup> That is, of trivial content or significance.

<sup>66</sup> That is, provincial or local.

of spirit. The visible creation is the terminus or the circumference of the invisible world. "Material objects," said a French philosopher, "are necessarily kinds of *scoriæ*"<sup>75</sup> of the substantial thoughts of the Creator, which must always preserve an exact relation to their first origin; in other words, visible nature must have a spiritual and moral side."<sup>76</sup>

This doctrine is abstruse, and though the images of "garment," "*scoriæ*," "mirror," etc., may stimulate the fancy, we must summon the aid of subtler and more vital expositors to make it plain. "Every scripture is to be interpreted by the same spirit which gave it forth,"—is the fundamental law of criticism. A life in harmony with Nature, the love of truth and of virtue, will purge the eyes to understand her text. By degrees we may come to know the primitive sense of the permanent objects of nature, so that the world shall be to us an open book, and every form significant of its hidden life and final cause.

A new interest surprises us, whilst, under the view now suggested, we contemplate the fearful extent and multitude of objects; since "every object rightly seen, unlocks a new faculty of the soul." That which was unconscious truth, becomes, when interpreted and defined in an object, a part of the domain of knowledge,—a new weapon in the magazine of power.

### V. Discipline

In view of the significance of nature, we arrive at once at a new fact, that nature is a discipline. This use of the world includes the preceding uses, as parts of itself.

Space, time, society, labor, climate, food, locomotion, the animals, the mechanical forces, give us sincerest lessons, day by day, whose meaning is unlimited. They educate both the Understanding and the Reason. Every property of matter is a school for the understanding,—its solidity or resistance, its inertia, its extension, its figure, its divisibility. The understanding adds, divides, combines, measures, and finds nutriment and room for its activity in this worthy scene. Meantime, Reason transfers all these lessons into its own world of thought, by perceiving the analogy that marries Matter and Mind.

1. Nature is a discipline of the understanding in intellectual truths. Our dealing with sensible objects

is a constant exercise in the necessary lessons of difference, of likeness, of order, of being and seeming, of progressive arrangement; of ascent from particular to general; of combination to one end of manifold forces. Proportioned to the importance of the organ to be formed, is the extreme care with which its tuition is provided,—a care pretermitted in no single case. What tedious training, day after day, year after year, never ending, to form the common sense; what continual reproduction of annoyances, inconveniences, dilemmas; what rejoicing over us of little men; what disputing of prices, what reckonings of interest,—and all to form the Hand of the mind;—to instruct us that "good thoughts are no better than good dreams, unless they be executed!"

The same good office is performed by Property and its filial systems of debt and credit. Debt, grinding debt, whose iron face the widow, the orphan, and the sons of genius fear and hate;—debt, which consumes so much time, which so cripples and disheartens a great spirit with cares that seem so base, is a preceptor whose lessons cannot be foregone, and is needed most by those who suffer from it most. Moreover, property, which has been well compared to snow,—“if it fall level to-day, it will be blown into drifts to-morrow,”—is the surface action of internal machinery, like the index on the face of a clock. Whilst now it is the gymnastics of the understanding, it is hiving, in the foresight of the spirit, experience in profounder laws.

The whole character and fortune of the individual are affected by the least inequalities in the culture of the understanding; for example, in the perception of differences. Therefore is Space, and therefore Time, that man may know that things are not huddled and lumped, but sundered and individual. A bell and a plough have each their use, and neither can do the office of the other. Water is good to drink, coal to burn, wool to wear; but wool cannot be drunk, nor water spun, nor coal caten. The wise man shows his wisdom in separation, in gradation, and his scale of creatures and of merits is as wide as nature. The foolish have no range in their scale, but suppose every man is as every other man. What is not good they call the worst, and what is not hateful, they call the best.

In like manner, what good heed Nature forms in us! She pardons no mistakes. Her yea is yea, and her nay, nay.

<sup>75</sup> The refuse from melting of metals; dregs.

<sup>76</sup> Emerson's *Journals*, III, 512, show this passage to be derived from *The True Messiah* by Guillaume C. L. Oegger.



The first steps in Agriculture, Astronomy, Zoölogy (those first steps which the farmer, the hunter, and the sailor take), teach that Nature's dice are always loaded; that in her heaps and rubbish are concealed sure and useful results.

How calmly and genially the mind apprehends one after another the laws of physics! What noble emotions dilate the mortal as he enters into the councils of the creation, and feels by knowledge the privilege to BE! His insight refines him. The beauty of nature shines in his own breast. Man is greater that he can see this, and the universe less, because Time and Space relations vanish as laws are known.

Here again we are impressed and even daunted by the immense Universe to be explored. "What we know is a point to what we do not know." Open any recent journal of science, and weigh the problems suggested concerning Light, Heat, Electricity, Magnetism, Physiology, Geology, and judge whether the interest of natural science is likely to be soon exhausted.

Passing by many particulars of the discipline of nature, we must not omit to specify two.

The exercise of the Will, or the lesson of power, is taught in every event. From the child's successive possession of his several senses up to the hour when he saith, "Thy will be done!" he is learning the secret that he can reduce under his will not only particular events but great classes, nay, the whole series of events, and so conform all facts to his character. Nature is thoroughly mediate. It is made to serve. It receives the dominion of man as meekly as the ass on which the Saviour rode.<sup>77</sup> It offers all its kingdoms to man as the raw material which he may mould into what is useful. Man is never weary of working it up. He forges the subtle and delicate air into wise and melodious words, and gives them wing as angels of persuasion and command. One after another his victorious thought comes up with and reduces all things, until the world becomes at last only a realized will, 40—the double of the man.

2. Sensible objects conform to the premonitions of Reason and reflect the conscience. All things are moral; and in their boundless changes have an unceasing reference to spiritual nature. Therefore is nature glorious with form, color, and motion; that every globe in the remotest heaven, every chemical change from the rudest crystal up to the laws of life,

every change of vegetation from the first principle of growth in the eye of a leaf,<sup>78</sup> to the tropical forest and antediluvian coal-mine, every animal function from the sponge up to Hercules,<sup>79</sup> shall hint or thunder to man the laws of right and wrong, and echo the Ten Commandments. Therefore is Nature ever the ally of Religion: lends all her pomp and riches to the religious sentiment. Prophet and priest, David, Isaiah, Jesus, have drawn deeply from this source. This ethical character so penetrates the bone and marrow of nature, as to seem the end for which it was made. Whatever private purpose is answered by any member or part, this is its public and universal function, and is never omitted. Nothing in nature is exhausted in its first use. When a thing has served an end to the uttermost, it is wholly new for an ulterior service. In God, every end is converted into a new means. Thus the use of commodity, regarded by itself, is mean and squalid. But it is to the mind an education in the doctrine of Use, namely, that a thing is good only so far as it serves; that a conspiring of parts and efforts to the production of an end is essential to any being. The first and gross manifestation of this truth is our inevitable and hated training in values and wants, in corn and meat.

It has already been illustrated, that every natural process is a version of a moral sentence. The moral law lies at the centre of nature and radiates to the circumference. It is the pith and marrow of every substance, every relation, and every process. All things with which we deal, preach to us. What is a farm but a mute gospel? The chaff and the wheat, weeds and plants, blight, rain, insects, sun,—it is a sacred emblem from the first furrow of spring to the last stack which the snow of winter overtakes in the fields. But the sailor, the shepherd, the miner, the merchant, in their several resorts, have each an experience precisely parallel, and leading to the same conclusion: because all organizations are radically alike. Nor can it be doubted that this moral sentiment which thus scents the air, grows in the grain, and impregnates the waters of the world, is caught by man and sinks into his soul. The moral influence of nature upon every individual is that amount of truth which it illustrates to him. Who can estimate this? Who can guess how much firmness the sea-

<sup>78</sup> Indicative of the fact that Emerson was familiar with Goethe's morphological theories.

<sup>79</sup> The strong man of classical mythology.

<sup>77</sup> See Matthew 21:5.



beaten rock has taught the fisherman? how much tranquillity has been reflected to man from the azure sky, over whose unspotted deeps the winds forevermore drive flocks of stormy clouds, and leave no wrinkle or stain? how much industry and providence and affection we have caught from the pantomime of brutes? What a searching preacher of self-command is the varying phenomenon of Health!

Herein is especially apprehended the unity of Nature,—the unity in variety,—which meets us <sup>10</sup> everywhere. All the endless variety of things make an identical impression. Xenophanes <sup>80</sup> complained in his old age, that, look where he would, all things hastened back to Unity. He was weary of seeing the same entity in the tedious variety of forms. The fable of Proteus <sup>81</sup> has a cordial truth. A leaf, a drop, a crystal, a moment of time, is related to the whole, and partakes of the perfection of the whole. Each particle is a microcosm, and faithfully renders the likeness of the world.

Not only resemblances exist in things whose analogy is obvious, as when we detect the type of the human hand in the flipper of the fossil saurus,<sup>82</sup> but also in objects wherein there is great superficial unlikeness. Thus architecture is called “frozen music,” by De Staël and Goethe.<sup>83</sup> Vitruvius <sup>84</sup> thought an architect should be a musician. “A Gothic church,” said Coleridge, “is a petrified religion.” <sup>85</sup> Michael Angelo <sup>86</sup> maintained, that, to an architect, a knowledge of anatomy is essential. In Haydn’s <sup>87</sup> oratorios, <sup>30</sup> the notes present to the imagination not only motions, as of the snake, the stag, and the elephant, but colors also; as the green grass. The law of harmonic sound reappears in the harmonic colors. The granite is differenced in its laws only by the more or less of heat from the river that wears it away. The river, as it flows, resembles the air that flows over it; the air resembles the light which traverses it with more subtle currents; the light resembles the heat which rides with it through Space. Each creature is only a <sup>40</sup> modification of the other; the likeness in them is

more than the difference, and their radical law is one and the same. A rule of one art, or a law of one organization, holds true throughout nature. So intimate is this Unity, that, it is easily seen, it lies under the undermost garment of Nature, and betrays its source in Universal Spirit. For it pervades Thought also. Every universal truth which we express in words, implies or supposes every other truth. *Omne verum vero consonat.*<sup>88</sup> It is like a great circle on a sphere, comprising all possible circles; which, however, may be drawn and comprise it in like manner. Every such truth is the absolute Ens <sup>89</sup> seen from one side. But it has innumerable sides.

The central Unity is still more conspicuous in actions. Words are finite organs of the infinite mind. They cannot cover the dimensions of what is in truth. They break, chop, and impoverish it. An action is the perfection and publication of thought. A right action seems to fill the eye, and to be related to all nature. <sup>20</sup> “The wise man, in doing one thing, does all; or, in the one thing he does rightly, he sees the likeness of all which is done rightly.”

Words and actions are not the attributes of brute nature. They introduce us to the human form, of which all other organizations appear to be degradations. When this appears among so many that surround it, the spirit prefers it to all others. It says, “From such as this have I drawn joy and knowledge; in such as this have I found and beheld myself; I will speak to it; it can speak again; it can yield me thought already formed and alive.” In fact, the eye,—the mind,—is always accompanied by these forms, male and female; and these are incomparably the richest informations of the power and order that lie at the heart of things. Unfortunately every one of them bears the marks as of some injury; is marred and superficially defective. Nevertheless, far different from the deaf and dumb nature around them, these all rest like fountain-pipes on the unfathomed sea of thought and virtue whereto they alone, of all organizations, are the entrances.

<sup>80</sup> Xenophanes (570–480 B.C.), the Greek founder of the Eleatic school of philosophers who taught the unity of God and nature.

<sup>81</sup> Proteus, a Greek mythological figure, who could assume any shape.

<sup>82</sup> An extinct reptilian animal.

<sup>83</sup> See Madame de Staël’s *Corinne*, bk. IV, chap. iii, and Goethe’s *Conversations with Eckermann*, March 23, 1829. See also Emerson’s *Journals*, III, 363.

<sup>84</sup> A reference to Vitruvius’ *De architectura*, bk. I, chap. i, sec. 8.

<sup>85</sup> A modification of Coleridge’s observation, in his “Lecture on the General Character of the Gothic Mind in the Middle Ages” (*Literary Remains*, 1836), that “a Gothic cathedral is the petrification of our religion.”

<sup>86</sup> Emerson had lectured on Michelangelo in Boston, January, 1835.

<sup>87</sup> A reference to *The Creation* of Josef Haydn (1732–1809).

<sup>88</sup> “Each truth contains all other truths.”

<sup>89</sup> Being, in the abstract sense, as having existence without or within the mind.

It were a pleasant inquiry to follow into detail their ministry to our education, but where would it stop? We are associated in adolescent and adult life with some friends, who, like skies and waters, are coextensive with our idea; who, answering each to a certain affection of the soul, satisfy our desire on that side; whom we lack power to put at such focal distance from us, that we can mend or even analyze them. We cannot choose but love them. When much intercourse with a friend has supplied us with a standard of excellence, and has increased our respect for the resources of God who thus sends a real person to outgo our ideal; when he has, moreover, become an object of thought, and, whilst his character retains all its unconscious effect, is converted in the mind into solid and sweet wisdom,—it is a sign to us that his office is closing, and he is commonly withdrawn from our sight in a short time.

#### VI. Idealism <sup>90</sup>

Thus is the unspeakable but intelligible and practicable meaning of the world conveyed to man, the immortal pupil, in every object of sense. To this one end of Discipline, all parts of nature conspire.

A noble doubt perpetually suggests itself,—whether this end be not the Final Cause of the Universe; and whether nature outwardly exists. It is a sufficient account of that Appearance we call the World, that God will teach a human mind, and so makes it the receiver of a certain number of congruent sensations, which we call sun and moon, man and woman, house and trade. In my utter impotence to test the authenticity of the report of my senses, to know whether the impressions they make on me correspond with outlying objects, what difference does it make, whether Orion is up there in heaven, or some god paints the image in the firmament of the soul? The relations of parts and the end of the whole remaining the same, what is the difference, whether land and sea interact, and worlds revolve and intermingle without number or end.—deep yawning under deep, and galaxy balancing galaxy, throughout absolute space,—or whether, without relations of time and space, the same appearances are inscribed in the constant faith of man? Whether nature enjoy a substantial existence without, or is only in the

apocalypse <sup>91</sup> of the mind, it is alike useful and alike venerable to me. Be it what it may, it is ideal to me so long as I cannot try the accuracy of my senses.

The frivolous make themselves merry with the Ideal theory, as if its consequences were burlesque; as if it affected the stability of nature. It surely does not. God never jests with us, and will not compromise the end of nature by permitting any inconsequence in its procession. Any distrust of the permanence of laws would paralyze the faculties of man. Their permanence is sacredly respected, and his faith therein is perfect. The wheels and springs of man are all set to the hypothesis of the permanence of nature. We are not built like a ship to be tossed, but like a house to stand. It is a natural consequence of this structure, that so long as the active powers predominate over the reflective, we resist with indignation any hint that nature is more short-lived or mutable than spirit. The broker, the wheelwright, the carpenter, the tollman, are much displeased at the intimation.

But whilst we acquiesce entirely in the permanence of natural laws, the question of the absolute existence of nature still remains open. It is the uniform effect of culture on the human mind, not to shake our faith in the stability of particular phenomena, as of heat, water, azote; <sup>92</sup> but to lead us to regard nature as phenomenon, not a substance; to attribute necessary existence to spirit; to esteem nature as an accident and an effect.

To the senses and the unrenewed understanding, belongs a sort of instinctive belief in the absolute existence of nature. In their view man and nature are indissolubly joined. Things are ultimates, and they never look beyond their sphere. The presence of Reason mars this faith. The first effort of thought tends to relax this despotism of the senses which binds us to nature as if we were a part of it, and shows us nature aloof, and, as it were, afloat. Until this higher agency intervened, the animal eye sees, with wonderful accuracy, sharp outlines and colored surfaces. When the eye of Reason opens, to outline and surface are at once added grace and expression. These proceed from imagination and affection, and abate somewhat of the angular distinctness of objects. If the Reason be stimulated to more earnest vision, out-

<sup>90</sup> This section on "Idealism" is designed by Emerson to provide the transition between the sections on "Nature" (which precede) and that on "Spirit" (which follows).

<sup>91</sup> Revelation.

<sup>92</sup> Nitrogen.

lines and surfaces become transparent, and are no longer seen; causes and spirits are seen through them. The best moments of life are these delicious awakenings of the higher powers, and the reverential withdrawing of nature before its God.

Let us proceed to indicate the effects of culture.

1. Our first institution in the Ideal philosophy is a hint from Nature herself.

Nature is made to conspire with spirit to emancipate us. Certain mechanical changes, a small alteration in our local position, apprises us of a dualism. We are strangely affected by seeing the shore from a moving ship, from a balloon, or through the tints of an unusual sky. The least change in our point of view gives the whole world a pictorial air. A man who seldom rides, needs only to get into a coach and traverse his own town, to turn the street into a puppet-show. The men, the women,—talking, running, bartering, fighting,—the earnest mechanic, the loungee, the beggar, the boys, the dogs, are unrealized at once, or, at least, wholly detached from all relation to the observer, and seen as apparent, not substantial beings. What new thoughts are suggested by seeing a face of country quite familiar, in the rapid movement of the railroad car! Nay, the most wanted objects, (make a very slight change in the point of vision,) please us most. In a camera obscura,<sup>93</sup> the butcher's cart, and the figure of one of our own family amuse us. So a portrait of a well-known face gratifies us. Turn the eyes upside down, by looking at the landscape through your legs, and how agreeable is the picture, though you have seen it any time these twenty years!

In these cases, by mechanical means, is suggested the difference between the observer and the spectacle—between man and nature. Hence arises a pleasure mixed with awe; I may say, a low degree of the sublime is felt, from the fact, probably, that man is hereby apprised that whilst the world is a spectacle, something in himself is stable.

2. In a higher manner the poet communicates the same pleasure. By a few strokes he delineates, as on air, the sun, the mountain, the camp, the city, the hero, the maiden, not different from what we know them, but only lifted from the ground and afloat before the eye. He unfixes the land and the sea, makes them revolve around the axis of his primary thought, and disposes them anew. Possessed himself

<sup>93</sup> An early form of the modern camera.

by a heroic passion, he uses matter as symbols of it. The sensual man conforms thoughts to things; the poet conforms things to his thoughts. The one esteems nature as rooted and fast; the other, as fluid, and impresses his being thereon. To him, the refractory world is ductile and flexible; he invests dust and stones with humanity, and makes them the words of the Reason. The Imagination may be defined to be the use which the Reason makes of the material world. Shakespeare possesses the power of subordinating nature for the purposes of expression, beyond all poets. His imperial muse tosses the creation like a bauble from hand to hand, and uses it to embody any caprice of thought that is uppermost in his mind. The remotest spaces of nature are visited, and the farthest sundered things are brought together, by a subtle spiritual connection. We are made aware that magnitude of material things is relative, and all objects shrink and expand to serve the passion of the poet. Thus in his sonnets, the lays of birds, the scents and dyes of flowers he finds to be the *shadow* of his beloved; time, which keeps her from him, is his *chest*; the suspicion she has awakened, is her *ornament*;<sup>94</sup>

The ornament of beauty is Suspect,  
A crow which flies in heaven's sweetest air.<sup>95</sup>

His passion is not the fruit of chance; it swells, as he speaks, to a city, or a state,

No, it was builded far from accident;  
It suffers not in smiling pomp, nor falls  
Under the brow of thralling discontent;  
It fears not policy, that heretic,  
That works on leases of short numbered hours,  
But all alone stands hugely politic.<sup>96</sup>

In the strength of his constancy, the Pyramids<sup>97</sup> seem to him recent and transitory. The freshness of youth and love dazzles him with its resemblance to morning;

Take those lips away  
Which so sweetly were forsworn;  
And those eyes,—the break of day,  
Lights that do mislead the morn.<sup>98</sup>

The wild beauty of this hyperbole, I may say in passing, it would not be easy to match in literature.

<sup>94</sup> The allusions in this sentence are to Shakespeare's Sonnet xcvi.

<sup>95</sup> From Shakespeare's Sonnet lxx, slightly modified.

<sup>96</sup> From Sonnet cxxiv, condensed and slightly altered.

<sup>97</sup> See Sonnet cxxiii.

<sup>98</sup> See Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*, IV, i, 1-4.

This transfiguration which all material objects undergo through the passion of the poet,—this power which he exerts to dwarf the great, to magnify the small,—might be illustrated by a thousand examples from his Plays. I have before me the *Tempest*, and will cite only these few lines.

ARIEL. The strong based promontory  
Have I made shake, and by the spurs plucked up  
The pine and cedar.<sup>99</sup>

Prospero calls for music to soothe the frantic Alonzo, and his companions;

A solemn air, and the best comforter  
To an unsettled fancy, cure my brains  
Now useless, boiled within thy skull.<sup>100</sup>

Again;

The charm dissolves apace,  
And, as the morning steals upon the night,  
Melting the darkness, so their rising senses  
Begin to chase the ignorant fumes that mantle  
Their clearer reason.

Their understanding  
Begins to swell; and the approaching tide  
Will shortly fill the reasonable shores  
That now lie foul and muddy.<sup>101</sup>

The perception of real affinities between events (that is to say, of *ideal* affinities, for those only are real), enables the poet thus to make free with the most imposing forms and phenomena of the world, and to assert the predominance of the soul.

3. Whilst thus the poet animates nature with his own thoughts, he differs from the philosopher only herein, that the one proposes Beauty as his main end; the other Truth. But the philosopher, not less than the poet, postpones the apparent order and relations of things to the empire of thought. "The problem of philosophy," according to Plato, "is, for all that exists conditionally, to find a ground unconditioned and absolute."<sup>102</sup> It proceeds on the faith that a law determines all phenomena, which being known, the phenomena can be predicted. That law, when in the mind, is an idea. Its beauty is infinite. The true philosopher and the true poet are one, and a beauty, which is truth, and a truth, which is beauty, is the aim of both. Is not the charm of one of Plato's or

Aristotle's definitions strictly like that of the Antigone of Sophocles? It is, in both cases, that a spiritual life has been imparted to nature; that the solid seeming block of matter has been pervaded and dissolved by a thought; that this feeble human being has penetrated the vast masses of nature with an informing soul, and recognized itself in their harmony, that is, seized their law. In physics, when this is attained, the memory disburthens itself of its cumbrous catalogues of particulars, and carries centuries of observation in a single formula.

Thus even in physics, the material is degraded before the spiritual. The astronomer, the geometer, rely on their irrefragable analysis, and disdain the results of observation. The sublime remark of Euler<sup>103</sup> on his law of arches, "This will be found contrary to all experience, yet is true;" had already transferred nature into the mind, and left matter like an outcast corpse.

4. Intellectual science has been observed to beget invariably a doubt of the existence of matter. Turgot<sup>104</sup> said, "He that has never doubted the existence of matter, may be assured he has no aptitude for metaphysical inquiries." It fastens the attention upon immortal necessary uncreated natures, that is, upon Ideas; and in their presence we feel that the outward circumstance is a dream and a shade. Whilst we wait in this Olympus of gods, we think of nature as an appendix to the soul. We ascend into their region, and know that these are the thoughts of the Supreme Being. "These are they who were set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. When he prepared the heavens, they were there; when he established the clouds above, when he strengthened the fountains of the deep. Then they were by him, as one brought up with him. Of them took he counsel."<sup>105</sup>

Their influence is proportionate. As objects of science they are accessible to few men. Yet all men are capable of being raised by piety or by passion, into their region. And no man touches these divine natures, without becoming, in some degree, himself divine. Like a new soul, they renew the body. We become physically nimble and lightsome; we tread on air; life is no longer irksome, and we think it will never be so. No man fears age or misfortune or death

<sup>99</sup> Spoken by Prospero, not Ariel, in *The Tempest*, V, i, 46-48.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, V, i, 58-60.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, V, i, 64-68, 79-82.

<sup>102</sup> See Plato's *Republic*, bk. V.

<sup>103</sup> Leonhard Euler (1707-83), a Swiss mathematician.

<sup>104</sup> Anne Robert Jacques Turgot (1727-81), a French economist and statesman.

<sup>105</sup> See Proverbs 8:23, 27, 28, 30.

in their serene company, for he is transported out of the district of change. Whilst we behold unveiled the nature of Justice and Truth, we learn the difference between the absolute and the conditional or relative. We apprehend the absolute. As it were, for the first time, *we exist*. We become immortal, for we learn that time and space are relations of matter; that with a perception of truth or a virtuous will they have no affinity.

5. Finally, religion and ethics, which may be fitly<sup>106</sup> called the practice of ideas, or the introduction of ideas into life, have an analogous effect with all lower culture, in degrading nature and suggesting its dependence on spirit. Ethics and religion differ herein; that the one is the system of human duties commencing from man; the other, from God. Religion includes the personality of God; Ethics does not. They are one to our present design. They both put nature under foot. The first and last lesson of religion is, "The things that are seen, are temporal; the things<sup>107</sup> that are unseen, are eternal." It puts an affront upon nature. It does that for the unschooled, which philosophy does for Berkeley<sup>107</sup> and Viasa.<sup>108</sup> The uniform language that may be heard in the churches of the most ignorant sects is,—"*Contemn the unsubstantial shows of the world; they are vanities, dreams, shadows, unrealities; seek the realities of religion.*" The devotee flouts nature. Some theosophists<sup>109</sup> have arrived at a certain hostility and indignation towards nature, as the Manichean<sup>110</sup> and Plotinus.<sup>111</sup> They distrusted in themselves any looking back to these flesh-pots of Egypt.<sup>112</sup> Plotinus was ashamed of his body. In short, they might all say of matter, what Michael Angelo said of external beauty, "It is the frail and weary weed, in which God dresses the soul which he has called into time."

It appears that motion, poetry, physical and intel-

<sup>106</sup> II Corinthians 4:18.

<sup>107</sup> George Berkeley (1685-1753), a British philosopher and clergyman, who taught a system of idealistic philosophy which attracted Emerson.

<sup>108</sup> Viasa was a legendary Hindu sage and supposed author of a considerable portion of Sanskrit scriptures.

<sup>109</sup> Philosophers or theologians who claimed to derive knowledge of God and the world by direct mystical insight.

<sup>110</sup> A Manichean believed in the doctrines of Mani, or Manes, a Persian philosopher of the third century A.D., who held that man's body is derived from evil or darkness, while his soul flows from goodness or light.

<sup>111</sup> Plotinus (A.D. 204?-270), an Egyptian who lived at Rome and who turned Plato's doctrines into mystical and symbolic channels.

<sup>112</sup> See Exodus 16:3.

lectual science, and religion, all tend to affect our convictions of the reality of the external world. But I own there is something ungrateful in expanding too curiously the particulars of the general proposition, that all culture tends to imbue us with idealism. I have no hostility to nature, but a child's love to it. I expand and live in the warm day like corn and melons. Let us speak her fair. I do not wish to fling stones at my beautiful mother, nor soil my gentle nest. I only wish to indicate the true position of nature in regard to man, wherein to establish man all right education tends; as the ground which to attain is the object of human life, that is, of man's connection with nature. Culture inverts the vulgar views of nature, and brings the mind to call that apparent which it uses to call real, and that real which it uses to call visionary. Children, it is true, believe in the external world. The belief that it appears only, is an afterthought, but with culture this faith will as surely arise on the mind as did the first.

The advantage of the ideal theory over the popular faith is this, that it presents the world in precisely that view which is most desirable to the mind. It is, in fact, the view which Reason, both speculative and practical,<sup>113</sup> that is, philosophy and virtue, take. For seen in the light of thought, the world always is phenomenal; and virtue subordinates it to the mind. Idealism sees the world in God. It beholds the whole circle of persons and things, of actions and events, of country and religion, not as painfully accumulated, atom after atom, act after act, in an aged creeping Past, but as one vast picture which God paints on the instant eternity for the contemplation of the soul. Therefore the soul holds itself off from a too trivial and microscopic study of the universal tablet. It respects the end too much to immerse itself in the means. It sees something more important in Christianity than the scandals of ecclesiastical history or the niceties of criticism; and, very incurious concerning persons or miracles, and not at all disturbed by chasms of historical evidence, it accepts from God the phenomenon, as it finds it, as the pure and awful form of religion in the world. It is not hot and passionate at the appearance of what it calls its own good or bad fortune, at the union or opposition of

<sup>113</sup> About the only indication contained in *Nature* that Emerson recognized Kant's all-important distinction between the purely regulative Reason and the practically constitutive Reason.

other persons. No man is its enemy. It accepts whatsoever befalls, as part of its lesson. It is a watcher more than a doer, and it is a doer, only that it may the better watch.

## VII. Spirit

It is essential to a true theory of nature and of man, that it should contain somewhat <sup>114</sup> progressive. Uses that are exhausted or that may be, and facts that end in the statement, cannot be all that is true of this brave lodging wherein man is harbored, and wherein all his faculties find appropriate and endless exercise. And all the uses of nature admit of being summed in one, which yields the activity of man an infinite scope. Through all its kingdoms, to the suburbs and outskirts of things, it is faithful to the cause whence it had its origin. It always speaks of Spirit. It suggests the absolute. It is a perpetual effect. It is a great shadow pointing always to the sun behind us.

The aspect of Nature is devout. Like the figure of Jesus, she stands with bended head, and hands folded upon the breast. The happiest man is he who learns from nature the lesson of worship.

Of that ineffable essence which we call Spirit, he that thinks most, will say least. We can foresee God in the coarse, and, as it were, distant phenomena of matter; but when we try to define and describe himself, both language and thought desert us, and we are as helpless as fools and savages. That essence refuses <sup>30</sup> to be recorded in propositions, but when man has worshipped him intellectually, the noblest ministry of nature is to stand as the apparition of God. It is the organ through which the universal spirit speaks to the individual, and strives to lead back the individual to it.

When we consider Spirit, we see that the views already presented do not include the whole circumference of man. We must add some related thoughts.

Three problems are put by nature to the mind: <sup>40</sup> What is matter? Whence is it? and Whereto? The first of these questions only, the ideal theory answers. Idealism saith: matter is a phenomenon, not a substance. Idealism acquaints us with the total disparity between the evidence of our own being and the evidence of the world's being. The one is perfect; the other, incapable of any assurance; the mind is a part

<sup>114</sup> Something.

of the nature of things; the world is a divine dream, from which we may presently awake to the glories and certainties of day. Idealism is a hypothesis to account for nature by other principles than those of carpentry and chemistry. Yet, if it only deny the existence of matter, it does not satisfy the demands of the spirit. It leaves God out of me. It leaves me in the splendid labyrinth of my perceptions, to wander without end. Then the heart resists it, because it balks the affections in denying substantive being to men and women. Nature is so pervaded with human life that there is something of humanity in all and in every particular. But this theory makes nature foreign to me, and does not account for that consanguinity which we acknowledge to it.

Let it stand then, in the present state of our knowledge, merely as a useful introductory hypothesis, serving to apprise us of the eternal distinction between the soul and the world.<sup>115</sup>

<sup>20</sup> But when, following the invisible steps of thought, we come to inquire. Whence is matter? and Whereto? many truths arise to us out of the recesses of consciousness. We learn that the highest is present to the soul of man; that the dread universal essence, which is not wisdom, or love, or beauty, or power, but all in one, and each entirely, is that for which all things exist, and that by which they are; that spirit creates; that behind nature, throughout nature, spirit is present; one and not compound it does not act upon us from without, that is, in space and time, but spiritually, or through ourselves: therefore, that spirit, that is, the Supreme Being, does not build up nature around us, but puts it forth through us, as the life of the tree puts forth new branches and leaves through the pores of the old. As a plant upon the earth, so a man rests upon the bosom of God; he is nourished by unfailing fountains, and draws at his need inexhaustible power. Who can set bounds to the possibilities of man? Once inhale the upper air, <sup>40</sup> being admitted to behold the absolute natures of justice and truth, and we learn that man has access to the entire mind of the Creator, is himself the creator in the finite. This view, which admonishes me where the sources of wisdom and power lie, and points to virtue as to

<sup>115</sup> This sentence contains an all-important, if reluctant, admission on Emerson's part that the ideal theory (whether Berkeleyan, Kantian, or Platonic) still leaves some questions unanswered.

"The golden key  
Which opes the palace of eternity,"<sup>116</sup>

carries upon its face the highest certificate of truth, because it animates me to create my own world through the purification of my soul.

The world proceeds<sup>117</sup> from the same spirit as the body of man. It is a remoter and inferior incarnation of God, a projection of God in the unconscious. But it differs from the body in one important respect. It is not, like that, now subjected to the human will. Its serene order is inviolable by us. It is, therefore, to us, the present expositor of the divine mind. It is a fixed point whereby we may measure our departure. As we degenerate, the contrast between us and our house is more evident. We are as much strangers in nature as we are aliens from God. We do not understand the notes of birds. The fox and the deer run away from us; the bear and tiger rend us. We do not know the uses of more than a few plants, as corn and the apple, the potato and the vine. Is not the landscape, every glimpse of which hath a grandeur, a face of him?<sup>20</sup> Yet this may show us what discord is between man and nature, for you cannot freely admire a noble landscape if laborers are digging in the field hard by. The poet finds something ridiculous in his delight until he is out of the sight of men.

#### VIII. Prospects<sup>118</sup>

In inquiries respecting the laws of the world and the frame of things, the highest reason is always the truest. That which seems faintly possible, it is so refined, is often faint and dim because it is deepest seated in the mind among the eternal verities. Empirical<sup>119</sup> science is apt to cloud the sight, and by the very knowledge of functions and processes to bereave the student of the manly contemplation of the whole. The savant becomes unpoetic. But the best read naturalist who lends an entire and devout attention to truth, will see that there remains much to learn of his relation to the world, and that it is not to be<sup>40</sup> learned by any addition or subtraction or other comparison of known quantities, but is arrived at by untaught sallies of the spirit, by a continued self-recovery, and by entire humility. He will perceive

that there are far more excellent qualities in the student than preciseness and infallibility; that a guess is often more fruitful than an indisputable affirmation, and that a dream may let us deeper into the secret of nature than a hundred concerted experiments.

For the problems to be solved are precisely those which the physiologist and the naturalist omit to state. It is not so pertinent to man to know all the individuals of the animal kingdom, as it is to know whence and whereto is this tyrannizing unity in his constitution, which evermore separates and classifies things, endeavoring to reduce the most diverse to one form. When I behold a rich landscape, it is less to my purpose to recite correctly the order and superposition of the strata, than to know why all thought of multitude is lost in a tranquil sense of unity. I cannot greatly honor minuteness in details, so long as there is no hint to explain the relation between things and thoughts; no ray upon the *metaphysics*<sup>120</sup> of conchology,<sup>121</sup> of botany, of the arts, to show the relation of the forms of flowers, shells, animals, architecture, to the mind, and build science upon ideas. In a cabinet of natural history,<sup>122</sup> we become sensible of a certain occult recognition and sympathy in regard to the most unwieldy and eccentric forms of beast, fish, and insect. The American who has been confined, in his own country, to the sight of buildings designed after foreign models, is surprised on entering York Minster<sup>123</sup> or St. Peter's at Rome, by the feeling that these structures are imitations also,—faint copies of an invisible archetype. Nor has science sufficient humanity, so long as the naturalist overlooks that wonderful congruity which subsists between man and the world; of which he is lord, not because he is the most subtle inhabitant, but because he is its head and heart, and finds something of himself in every great and small thing, in every mountain stratum, in every new law of color, fact of astronomy, or atmospheric influence which observation or analysis lays open. A perception of this mystery inspires the muse of George Herbert,<sup>124</sup> the beautiful psalmist of the seventeenth century. The following lines are part of his little poem on Man.

<sup>116</sup> From Milton's *Comus*, 13-14.

<sup>117</sup> Derives or emanates.

<sup>118</sup> That is, results, conclusions, outlook, or long view.

<sup>119</sup> Experimental; based on observation.

<sup>120</sup> Here used in the sense of first causes, or fundamentals.

<sup>121</sup> The science of shells and shellfish.

<sup>122</sup> That is, display cases of specimens.

<sup>123</sup> The cathedral in York, England.

<sup>124</sup> George Herbert (1593-1633), author of the poem "Man," from which Emerson quotes stanzas 3-6 and 8 (omitting stanzas 1, 2, 7, and 9).

Man is all symmetry,  
Full of proportions, one limb to another,  
And all to all the world besides.  
Each part may call the farthest, brother;  
For head with foot hath private amity,  
And both with moons and tides.

Nothing hath got so far  
But man hath caught and kept it as his prey;  
His eyes dismount the highest star:  
He is in little all the sphere.  
Herbs gladly cure our flesh, because that they  
Find their acquaintance there.

For us, the winds do blow,  
The earth doth rest, heaven move, and fountains  
flow;  
Nothing we see, but means our good,  
As our delight, or as our treasure;  
The whole is either our cupboard of food,  
Or cabinet of pleasure.

The stars have us to bed:  
Night draws the curtain; which the sun withdraws.  
Music and light attend our head.  
All things unto our flesh are kind,  
In their descent and being; to our mind,  
In their ascent and cause.

More servants wait on man  
Than he'll take notice of. In every path,  
He treads down that which doth befriend him  
When sickness makes him pale and wan.  
Oh mighty love! Man is one world, and hath  
Another to attend him.

The perception of this class of truths makes the 30 attraction which draws men to science, but the end is lost sight of in attention to the means. In view of this half-sight of science, we accept the sentence of Plato, that "poetry comes nearer to vital truth than history."<sup>125</sup> Every surmise and vaticination<sup>126</sup> of the mind is entitled to a certain respect, and we learn to prefer imperfect theories, and sentences which contain glimpses of truth, to digested systems which have no one valuable suggestion. A wise writer will feel that the ends of study and composition are best 40 answered by announcing undiscovered regions of thought, and so communicating through hope, new activity to the torpid spirit.

I shall therefore conclude this essay with some traditions of man and nature, which a certain poet<sup>127</sup>

<sup>125</sup> See Plato's *Laws*, bk. III, 682.

<sup>126</sup> Prophecy or forecast.

<sup>127</sup> Possibly Amos Bronson Alcott, the neighbor of Emerson in Concord.

<sup>128</sup> See Daniel 4:33.

sang to me; and which, as they have always been in the world, and perhaps reappear to every bard, may be both history and prophecy.

"The foundations of man are not in matter, but in spirit. But the element of spirit is eternity. To it, therefore, the longest series of events, the oldest chronologies are young and recent. In the cycle of the universal man, from whom the known individuals proceed, centuries are points, and all history is but 10 the epoch of one degradation.

"We distrust and deny inwardly our sympathy with nature. We own and disown our relation to it, by turns. We are like Nebuchadnezzar,<sup>128</sup> dethroned, bereft of reason, and eating grass like an ox. But who can set limits to the remedial force of spirit?

"A man is a god in ruins. When men are innocent, life shall be longer, and shall pass into the immortal as gently as we awake from dreams. Now, the world would be insane and rabid, if these disorganizations 20 should last for hundreds of years. It is kept in check by death and infancy. Infancy is the perpetual Messiah, which comes into the arms of fallen men, and pleads with them to return to paradise.

"Man is the dwarf of himself. Once he was permeated and dissolved by spirit. He filled nature with his overflowing currents. Out from him sprang the sun and moon; from man the sun, from woman the moon. The laws of his mind, the periods of his actions externized themselves into day and night, into the year and the seasons. But, having made for himself this huge shell, his waters retired; he no longer fills the veins and veinlets; he is shrunk to a drop. He sees that the structure still fits him, but fits him colossally. Say, rather, once it fitted him, now it corresponds to him from far and on high. He adores timidly his own work. Now is man the follower of the sun, and woman the follower of the moon. Yet sometimes he starts in his slumber, and wonders at himself and his house, and muses strangely at the resemblance betwixt him and it. He perceives that if his law is still paramount, if still he have elemental power, if his word is sterling yet in nature, it is not conscious power, it is not inferior but superior to his will. It is instinct." Thus my Orphic<sup>129</sup> poet sang.

At present, man applies to nature but half his

<sup>129</sup> Orpheus was a favorite poet-saint for romanticists and transcendentalists, his ability to move stones and trees by his music becoming a romantic ideal of creative and imaginative poetic power. Orphic utterances, like Alcott's "Orphic Sayings," often took on symbolic, sometimes cloudy, meanings.



force. He works on the world with his understanding alone. He lives in it and masters it by a penny-wisdom; and he that works most in it is but a half-man, and whilst his arms are strong and his digestion good, his mind is imbruted, and he is a selfish savage. His relation to nature, his power over it, is through the understanding, as by manure; the economic use of fire, wind, water, and the mariner's needle; steam, coal, chemical agriculture; the repairs of the human body by the dentist and the surgeon. This is such a resumption of power as if a banished king should buy his territories inch by inch, instead of vaulting at once into his throne. Meantime, in the thick darkness, there are not wanting gleams of a better light,—occasional examples of the action of man upon nature with his entire force,—with reason as well as understanding. Such examples are, the traditions of miracles in the earliest antiquity of all nations; the history of Jesus Christ; the achievements of a principle, as in religious and political revolutions, and in the abolition of the slave-trade; the miracles of enthusiasm, as those reported of Swedenborg, Hohenlohe,<sup>130</sup> and the Shakers;<sup>131</sup> many obscure and yet contested facts, now arranged under the name of Animal Magnetism;<sup>132</sup> prayer; eloquence; self-healing; and the wisdom of children. These are examples of Reason's momentary grasp of the sceptre; the exertions of a power which exists not in time or space, but an instantaneous in-streaming causing power. The difference between the actual and the ideal force of man is happily figured by the schoolmen, in saying, that the knowledge of man is an evening knowledge, *vespertina cognitio*, but that of God is a morning knowledge, *matutina cognitio*.<sup>132a</sup>

The problem of restoring to the world original and eternal beauty is solved by the redemption of the soul. The ruin or the blank that we see when we look at nature, is in our own eye. The axis of vision is not coincident with the axis of things, and so they appear not transparent but opaque. The reason why the world lacks unity, and lies broken and in heaps, is because man is disunited with himself. He cannot be a naturalist until he satisfies all the demands of the spirit. Love is as much its demand as perception.

Indeed, neither can be perfect without the other. In the uttermost meaning of the words, thought is devout, and devotion is thought. Deep calls unto deep.<sup>133</sup> But in actual life, the marriage is not celebrated. There are innocent men who worship God after the tradition of their fathers, but their sense of duty has not yet extended to the use of all their faculties. And there are patient naturalists, but they freeze their subject under the wintry light of the understanding. Is not prayer also a study of truth,—a sally of the soul into the unfound infinite? No man ever prayed heartily without learning something. But when a faithful thinker, resolute to detach every object from personal relations and see it in the light of thought, shall, at the same time, kindle science with the fire of the holiest affections, then will God go forth anew into the creation.

It will not need, when the mind is prepared for study, to search for objects. The invariable mark of wisdom is to see the miraculous in the common. What is a day? What is a year? What is summer? What is woman? What is a child? What is sleep? To our blindness, these things seem unaffecting. We make fables to hide the baldness of the fact and conform it, as we say, to the higher law of the mind. But when the fact is seen under the light of an idea, the gaudy fable fades and shrivels. We behold the real higher law. To the wise, therefore, a fact is true poetry, and the most beautiful of fables. These wonders are brought to our own door. You also are a man. Man and woman and their social life, poverty, labor, sleep, fear, fortune, are known to you. Learn that none of these things is superficial, but that each phenomenon has its roots in the faculties and affections of the mind. Whilst the abstract question occupies your intellect, nature brings it in the concrete to be solved by your hands. It were a wise inquiry for the closet, to compare, point by point, especially at remarkable crises in life, our daily history with the rise and progress of ideas in the mind.

So shall we come to look at the world with new eyes. It shall answer the endless inquiry of the intellect,—What is truth? and of the affections,—What is good? by yielding itself passive to the educated Will.

<sup>130</sup> Alexander Leopold Franz Emmerich, Prince of Hohenlohe-Waldenburg-Schillingsfürst (1794–1849), a reputed miracle-worker.

<sup>131</sup> Shakers were a contemporary pietistic group. Hawthorne and Emerson once made a visit to the Shaker community at Harvard, Mass.

<sup>132</sup> A form of hypnosis practiced by Franz Anton Mesmer (1734–1815).

<sup>132a</sup> The phrase "*vespertina cognitio*" signifies the twilight knowledge of man, contrasted with the full-day knowledge of God ("*matutina cognitio*").

<sup>133</sup> See Psalm 42:7.

Then shall come to pass what my poet said:<sup>134</sup> "Nature is not fixed but fluid. Spirit alters, moulds, makes it. The immobility or bruteness of nature is the absence of spirit; to pure spirit it is fluid, it is volatile, it is obedient. Every spirit builds itself a house; and beyond its house a world, and beyond its world a heaven. Know then that the world exists for you. For you is the phenomenon perfect. What we are, that only can we see. All that Adam had, all that Cæsar could, you have and can do. Adam called his house, heaven and earth; Cæsar called his house, Rome; you perhaps call yours, a cobbler's trade; a hundred acres of ploughed land; or a scholar's garret. Yet line for line and point for point your dominion is as great as theirs, though without fine names. Build therefore your own world. As fast as you conform your life to the pure idea in your mind, that will unfold its great proportions. A correspondent revolu-  
 tion in things will attend the influx of the spirit. So fast will disagreeable appearances, swine, spiders, snakes, pests, mad-houses, prisons, enemies, vanish; they are temporary and shall be no more seen. The sordor<sup>135</sup> and filths of nature, the sun shall dry up and the wind exhale. As when the summer comes from the south the snow-banks melt and the face of the earth becomes green before it, so shall the advancing spirit create its ornaments along its path, and carry with it the beauty it visits and the song which enchants it; it shall draw beautiful faces, warm hearts, wise discourse, and heroic acts, around its way, until evil is no more seen. The kingdom of man over nature, which cometh not with observation,—a dominion such as now is beyond his dream of God,—he shall enter without more wonder than the blind man feels who is gradually restored to perfect sight."  
 1833-1836 1836

### *The American Scholar*<sup>136</sup>

AN ORATION DELIVERED BEFORE THE PHI BETA KAPPA SOCIETY, AT CAMBRIDGE, AUGUST 31, 1837

Mr. President and Gentlemen:

I greet you on the recommencement of our literary year.<sup>137</sup> Our anniversary is one of hope, and, perhaps, not enough of labor. We do not meet for games of strength or skill,<sup>138</sup> for the recitation of histories, tragedies, and odes,<sup>139</sup> like the ancient Greeks; for parliaments of love and poesy, like the Troubadours;<sup>140</sup> nor for the advancement of science,<sup>141</sup> like our contemporaries in the British and European capitals. Thus far, our holiday has been simply a friendly sign of the survival of the love of letters amongst a people too busy to give to letters any more. As such it is precious as the sign of an indestructible instinct. Perhaps the time is already come when it ought to be, and will be, something else; when the sluggish intellect of this continent will look from under its iron lids and fill the postponed expectation of the world with something better than the exertions of mechanical skill. Our day of dependence, our long apprenticeship to the learning of other lands, draws to a close. The millions that around us are rushing  
 into life, cannot always be fed on the sere remains of foreign harvests. Events, actions arise, that must be sung, that will sing themselves. Who can doubt that poetry will revive and lead in a new age, as the star in the constellation Harp,<sup>142</sup> which now flames in our zenith, astronomers announce, shall one day be the pole-star for a thousand years?

In this hope I accept the topic which not only usage but the nature of our association seem to prescribe to this day,—the AMERICAN SCHOLAR. Year by year we come up hither to read one more chapter of his biography. Let us inquire what light new days and events have thrown on his character and his hopes.

It is one of those fables which out of an unknown antiquity convey an unlooked-for wisdom, that the gods, in the beginning, divided Man into men, that he might be more helpful to himself; just as the hand was divided into fingers, the better to answer its end.

The old fable covers a doctrine ever new and sub-

<sup>134</sup> Here begins a typical Carlylean peroration.

<sup>135</sup> Sordidness or filth.

<sup>136</sup> This address was published as a pamphlet in 1837.

<sup>137</sup> The college year then formally began in August.

<sup>138</sup> The Olympic contests of the Greeks.

<sup>139</sup> Dionysiac festivals when literary skills were tested.

<sup>140</sup> Medieval poets in southern France about 1100 to 1400 who held poetic contests.

<sup>141</sup> As in the case of the British Association for the Advancement of Science.

<sup>142</sup> An allusion to a star in the constellation Lyra.

time; that there is One Man,—present to all particular men only partially, or through one faculty; and that you must take the whole society to find the whole man. Man is not a farmer, or a professor, or an engineer, but he is all. Man is priest, and scholar, and statesman, and producer, and soldier. In the *divided* or social state these functions are parcelled out to individuals, each of whom aims to do his stint of the joint work, whilst each other performs his. The fable implies that the individual, to possess himself, must sometimes return from his own labor to embrace all the other laborers. But, unfortunately, this original unit, this fountain of power, has been so distributed to multitudes, has been so minutely subdivided and peddled out, that it is spilled into drops, and cannot be gathered. The state of society is one in which the members have suffered amputation from the trunk, and strut about so many walking monsters,—a good finger, a neck, a stomach, an elbow, but never a man.

Man is thus metamorphosed into a thing, into many things. The planter, who is Man sent out into the field to gather food, is seldom cheered by any idea of the true dignity of his ministry.<sup>143</sup> He sees his bushel and his cart, and nothing beyond, and sinks into the farmer, instead of Man on the farm. The tradesman scarcely ever gives an ideal worth to his work, but is ridden by the routine of his craft, and the soul is subject to dollars. The priest becomes a form; the attorney a statute-book; the mechanic a machine; the sailor a rope of the ship.

In this distribution of functions the scholar is the delegated intellect. In the right state he is *Man Thinking*. In the degenerate state, when the victim of society, he tends to become a mere thinker, or still worse, the parrot of other men's thinking.

In this view of him, as Man Thinking, the theory of his office is contained. Him Nature solicits with all her placid, all her monitory pictures; him the past instructs; him the future invites. Is not indeed every man a student, and do not all things exist for the student's behoof? And, finally, is not the true scholar the only true master? But the old oracle said, "All things have two handles: beware of the wrong one." In life, too often, the scholar errs with mankind and forfeits his privilege. Let us see him in his school, and consider him in reference to the main influences he receives.

<sup>143</sup> His work or vocation.

I. The first in time and the first in importance of the influences upon the mind is that of nature. Every day, the sun; and, after sunset, Night and her stars. Ever the winds blow; ever the grass grows. Every day, men and women, conversing—beholding and beholden. The scholar is he of all men whom this spectacle most engages. He must settle its value in his mind. What is nature to him? There is never a beginning, there is never an end, to the inexplicable continuity of this web of God, but always circular power returning into itself. Therein it resembles his own spirit, whose beginning, whose ending, he never can find,—so entire, so boundless. Far too as her splendors shine, system on system shooting like rays, upward, downward, without centre, without circumference,—in the mass and in the particle, Nature hastens to render account of herself to the mind. Classification begins. To the young mind every thing is individual, stands by itself. By and by, it finds how to join two things and see in them one nature; then three, then three thousand; and so, tyrannized over by its own unifying instinct, it goes on tying things together, diminishing anomalies, discovering roots running under ground whereby contrary and remote things cohere and flower out from one stem. It presently learns that since the dawn of history there has been a constant accumulation and classifying of facts. But what is classification but the perceiving that these objects are not chaotic, and are not foreign, but have a law which is also a law of the human mind? The astronomer discovers that geometry, a pure abstraction of the human mind, is the measure of planetary motion. The chemist finds proportions and intelligible method throughout matter; and science is nothing but the finding of analogy, identity, in the most remote parts. The ambitious soul sits down before each refractory fact; one after another reduces all strange constitutions, all new powers, to their class and their law, and goes on forever to animate the last fibre of organization, the outskirts of nature, by insight.

Thus to him, to this schoolboy under the bending dome of day, is suggested that he and it proceed from one root; one is leaf and one is flower; relation, sympathy, stirring in every vein. And what is that root? Is not that the soul of his soul? A thought too bold; a dream too wild. Yet when this spiritual light shall have revealed the law of more earthly natures, —when he has learned to worship the soul, and to see

that the natural philosophy that now is, is only the first gropings of its gigantic hand, he shall look forward to an ever expanding knowledge as to a becoming creator. He shall see that nature is the opposite of the soul, answering to it part for part. One is seal and one is print. Its beauty is the beauty of his own mind. Its laws are the laws of his own mind. Nature then becomes to him the measure of his attainments. So much of nature as he is ignorant of, so much of his own mind does he not yet possess. And, in fine,<sup>140</sup> the ancient precept, "Know thyself," and the modern precept, "Study nature," become at last one maxim.

II. The next great influence<sup>144</sup> into the spirit of the scholar is the mind of the Past,—in whatever form, whether of literature, of art, of institutions, that mind is inscribed. Books are the best type of the influence of the past, and perhaps we shall get at the truth,—learn the amount of this influence more conveniently,—by considering their value alone.

The theory of books is noble. The scholar of the 20 first age received into him the world around; brooded thereon; gave it the new arrangement of his own mind, and uttered it again. It came into him life; it went out from him truth. It came to him short-lived actions; it went out from him immortal thoughts. It came to him business; it went from him poetry. It was dead fact; now, it is quick<sup>145</sup> thought. It can stand, and it can go. It now endures, it now flies, it now inspires. Precisely in proportion to the depth of mind from which it issued, so high does it 30 soar, so long does it sing.

Or, I might say, it depends on how far the process had gone, of transmuting life into truth. In proportion to the completeness of the distillation, so will the purity and imperishableness of the product be. But none is quite perfect. As no air-pump can by any means make a perfect vacuum, so neither can any artist entirely exclude the conventional, the local, the perishable from his book, or write a book of pure thought, that shall be as efficient, in all respects, to a 40 remote posterity, as to contemporaries, or rather to the second age. Each age, it is found, must write its own books; or rather, each generation for the next succeeding. The books of an older period will not fit this.

Yet hence arises a grave mischief. The sacredness

<sup>144</sup> That is, "influx" or "flowing into."

<sup>145</sup> Living.

<sup>146</sup> Marcus Tullius Cicero (106-43 B.C.), Roman orator and statesman.

which attaches to the act of creation, the act of thought, is transferred to the record. The poet chanting was felt to be a divine man: henceforth the chant is divine also. The writer was a just and wise spirit: henceforward it is settled the book is perfect; as love of the hero corrupts into worship of his statue. Instantly the book becomes noxious: the guide is a tyrant. The sluggish and perverted mind of the multitude, slow to open to the incursions of Reason, having once so opened, having once received this book, stands upon it, and makes an outcry if it is disparaged. Colleges are built on it. Books are written on it by thinkers, not by Man Thinking; by men of talent, that is, who start wrong, who set out from accepted dogmas, not from their own sight of principles. Meek young men grow up in libraries, believing it their duty to accept the views which Cicero,<sup>146</sup> which Locke,<sup>147</sup> which Bacon,<sup>148</sup> have given; forgetful that Cicero, Locke, and Bacon were only young 50 men in libraries when they wrote these books.

Hence, instead of Man Thinking, we have the bookworm. Hence the book-learned class, who value books, as such; not as related to nature and the human constitution, but as making a sort of Third Estate<sup>149</sup> with the world and the soul. Hence the restorers of readings, the emendators, the bibliomaniacs of all degrees.

Books are the best of things, well used; abused, among the worst. What is the right use? What is the one end which all means go to effect? They are for nothing but to inspire. I had better never see a book than to be warped by its attraction clean out of my own orbit, and made a satellite instead of a system. The one thing in the world, of value, is the active soul. This every man is entitled to; this every man contains within him, although in almost all men obstructed and as yet unborn. The soul active sees absolute truth and utters truth, or creates. In this action it is genius; not the privilege of here and there a favorite, but the sound estate of every man. In its essence it is progressive. The book, the college, the school of art, the institution of any kind, stop with some past utterance of genius. This is good, say they,—let us hold by this. They pin me down. They look backward and not forward. But genius looks forward: the eyes of man are set in his forehead, not in his

<sup>147</sup> John Locke (1632-1704), English philosopher.

<sup>148</sup> Francis Bacon (1561-1626), English philosopher.

<sup>149</sup> The Third Estate in monarchical France were the common people.

hindhead: man hopes: genius creates. Whatever talents may be, if the man create not, the pure efflux<sup>150</sup> of the Deity is not his;—cinders and smoke there may be, but not yet flame. There are creative manners, there are creative actions, and creative words; manners, actions, words, that is, indicative of no custom or authority, but springing spontaneous from the mind's own sense of good and fair.

On the other part, instead of being its own seer, let it receive from another mind its truth, though it were in torrents of light, without periods of solitude, inquest, and self-recovery, and a fatal disservice is done. Genius is always sufficiently the enemy of genius by over-influence. The literature of every nation bears me witness. The English dramatic poets have Shakspearized now for two hundred years.

Undoubtedly there is a right way of reading, so it be sternly subordinated. Man Thinking must not be subdued by his instruments. Books are for the scholar's idle times. When he can read God directly, the hour is too precious to be wasted in other men's transcripts of their readings. But when the intervals of darkness come, as come they must,—when the sun is hid and the stars withdraw their shining,—we repair to the lamps which were kindled by their ray, to guide our steps to the East again, where the dawn is. We hear, that we may speak. The Arabian proverb says, "A fig tree, looking on a fig tree, becometh fruitful."

It is remarkable, the character of the pleasure we derive from the best books. They impress us with the conviction that one nature wrote and the same reads. We read the verses of one of the great English poets, of Chaucer,<sup>151</sup> of Marvell,<sup>152</sup> of Dryden,<sup>153</sup> with the most modern joy,—with a pleasure, I mean, which is in great part caused by the abstraction of all time from their verses. There is some awe mixed with the joy of our surprise, when this poet, who lived in some past world, two or three hundred years ago, says that which lies close to my own soul, that which I also had well-nigh thought and said. But for the evidence thence afforded to the philosophical doctrine of the identity of all minds, we should suppose some pre-established harmony, some foresight of souls that were to be, and some preparation of stores for their

future wants, like the fact observed in insects, who lay up food before death for the young grub they shall never see.

I would not be hurried by any love of system, by an exaggeration of instincts, to underrate the Book. We all know, that as the human body can be nourished on any food, though it were boiled grass and the broth of shoes, so the human mind can be fed by any knowledge. And great and heroic men have existed who had almost no other information than by the printed page. I only would say that it needs a strong head to bear that diet. One must be an inventor to read well. As the proverb says, "He that would bring home the wealth of the Indies, must carry out the wealth of the Indies."<sup>154</sup> There is then creative reading as well as creative writing. When the mind is braced by labor and invention, the page of whatever book we read becomes luminous with manifold allusion. Every sentence is doubly significant, and the sense of our author is as broad as the world. We then see, what is always true, that as the seer's hour of vision is short and rare among heavy days and months, so is its record, perchance, the least part of his volume. The discerning will read, in his Plato or Shakspeare, only that least part,—only the authentic utterances of the oracle;—all the rest he rejects, were it never so many times Plato's and Shakspeare's.

Of course there is a portion of reading quite indispensable to a wise man. History and exact science he must learn by laborious reading. Colleges, in like manner, have their indispensable office,—to teach elements. But they can only highly serve us when they aim not to drill, but to create; when they gather from far every ray of various genius to their hospitable halls, and by the concentrated fires, set the hearts of their youth on flame. Thought and knowledge are natures in which apparatus and pretension avail nothing. Gowns<sup>155</sup> and pecuniary foundations, though of towns of gold, can never countervail the least sentence or syllable of wit.<sup>156</sup> Forget this, and our American colleges will recede in their public importance, whilst they grow richer every year.

III. There goes in the world a notion that the scholar should be a recluse, a valetudinarian,—as unfit for any handiwork or public labor as a penknife

<sup>150</sup> A flowing out.

<sup>151</sup> Geoffrey Chaucer (1340-1400), English poet.

<sup>152</sup> Andrew Marvell (1621-78), English poet.

<sup>153</sup> John Dryden (1630-1700), English poet, dramatist, and critic.

<sup>154</sup> See Emerson's *Journals*, IV, 254.

<sup>155</sup> Academic dress here used as a symbol of endowed fellowships.

<sup>156</sup> In the sense of wisdom.

for an axe. The so-called "practical men" sneer at speculative men, as if, because they speculate<sup>157</sup> or see, they could do nothing. I have heard it said that the clergy,—who are always, more universally than any other class, the scholars of their day,—are addressed as women; that the rough, spontaneous conversation of men they do not hear, but only a mincing and diluted speech. They are often virtually disfranchised; and indeed there are advocates for their celibacy. As far as this is true of the studious classes, it is not just and wise. Action is with the scholar subordinate, but it is essential. Without it he is not yet man. Without it thought can never ripen into truth. Whilst the world hangs before the eye as a cloud of beauty, we cannot even see its beauty. Inaction is cowardice, but there can be no scholar without the heroic mind. The preamble of thought, the transition through which it passes from the unconscious to the conscious, is action. Only so much do I know, as I have lived. Instantly we know whose words are loaded with life, and whose not.

The world,—this shadow of the soul, or *other me*,—lies wide around. Its attractions are the keys which unlock my thoughts and make me acquainted with myself. I run eagerly into this resounding tumult. I grasp the hands of those next me, and take my place in the ring to suffer and to work, taught by an instinct that so shall the dumb abyss be vocal with speech. I pierce its order; I dissipate its fear; I dispose of it within the circuit of my expanding life. So much only of life as I know by experience, so much of the wilderness have I vanquished and planted, or so far have I extended my being, my dominion. I do not see how any man can afford, for the sake of his nerves and his nap, to spare any action in which he can partake. It is pearls and rubies to his discourse. Drudgery, calamity, exasperation, want, are instructors in eloquence and wisdom. The true scholar grudges every opportunity of action past by, as a loss of power. It is the raw material out of which the intellect moulds her splendid products. A strange process too, this by which experience is converted into thought, as a mulberry leaf is converted into satin. The manufacture goes forward at all hours.

The actions and events of our childhood and youth are now matters of calmest observation. They lie like fair pictures in the air. Not so with our recent

actions,—with the business which we now have in hand. On this we are quite unable to speculate. Our affections as yet circulate through it. We no more feel or know it than we feel the feet, or the hand, or the brain of our body. The new deed is yet a part of life,—remains for a time immersed in our unconscious life. In some contemplative hour it detaches itself from the life like a ripe fruit, to become a thought of the mind. Instantly it is raised, transfigured; the corruptible has put on incorruption.<sup>158</sup> Henceforth it is an object of beauty, however base its origin and neighborhood. Observe too the impossibility of antedating this act. In its grub state, it cannot fly, it cannot shine, it is a dull grub. But suddenly, without observation, the selfsame thing unfurls beautiful wings, and is an angel of wisdom. So is there no fact, no event, in our private history, which shall not, sooner or later, lose its adhesive, inert form, and astonish us by soaring from our body into the empyrean. Cradle and infancy, school and playground, the fear of boys, and dogs, and ferules, the love of little maids and berries, and many another fact that once filled the whole sky, are gone already; friend and relative, profession and party, town and country, nation and world, must also soar and sing.

Of course, he who has put forth his total strength in fit actions has the richest return of wisdom. I will not shut myself out of this globe of action, and transplant an oak into a flower-pot, there to hunger and pine; nor trust the revenue of some single faculty, and exhaust one vein of thought, much like those Savoyards,<sup>159</sup> who, getting their livelihood by carving shepherds, shepherdesses, and smoking Dutchmen, for all Europe, went out one day to the mountain to find stock, and discovered that they had whittled up the last of their pine trees. Authors we have, in numbers, who have written out their vein, and who, moved by a commendable prudence, sail for Greece or Palestine, follow the trapper into the prairie, or ramble round Algiers, to replenish their merchantable stock.

If it were only for a vocabulary, the scholar would be covetous of action. Life is our dictionary. Years are well spent in country labors; in town, in the insight into trades and manufactures; in frank intercourse with many men and women; in science; in art; to the one end of mastering in all their facts a

<sup>157</sup> Speculate in the Latin means to spy out, to observe, or to see.

<sup>158</sup> See 1 Corinthians 15:53.

<sup>159</sup> Inhabitants of Savoy, northwestern Italy.

language by which to illustrate and embody our perceptions. I learn immediately from any speaker how much he has already lived, through the poverty or the splendor of his speech. Life lies behind us as the quarry from whence we get tiles and cope-stones for the masonry of to-day. This is the way to learn grammar. Colleges and books only copy the language which the field and the work-yard made.

But the final value of action, like that of books, and better than books, is that it is a resource. That great principle of Undulation in nature, that shows itself in the inspiring and expiring of the breath; in desire and satiety; in the ebb and flow of the sea; in day and night; in heat and cold; and, as yet more deeply ingrained in every atom and every fluid, is known to us under the name of Polarity,—these “fits of easy transmission and reflection,”<sup>160</sup> as Newton called them, are the law of nature because they are the law of spirit.

The mind now thinks, now acts, and each fit reproduces the other. When the artist has exhausted his materials, when the fancy no longer paints, when thoughts are no longer apprehended and books are a weariness,—he has always the resource to *live*. Character is higher than intellect. Thinking is the function. Living is the functionary. The stream retreats to its source. A great soul will be strong to live, as well as strong to think. Does he lack organ or medium to impart his truths? He can still fall back on this elemental force of living them. This is a total act.<sup>30</sup> Thinking is a partial act. Let the grandeur of justice shine in his affairs. Let the beauty of affection cheer his lowly roof. Those “far from fame,” who dwell and act with him, will feel the force of his constitution in the doings and passages of the day better than it can be measured by any public and designed display. Time shall teach him that the scholar loses no hour which the man lives. Herein he unfolds the sacred germ of his instinct, screened from influence. What is lost in seemliness is gained in strength. Not<sup>40</sup> out of those on whom systems of education have exhausted their culture, comes the helpful giant to destroy the old or to build the new, but out of unhandseled<sup>161</sup> savage nature; out of terrible Druids<sup>162</sup>

and Berserkers<sup>163</sup> come at last Alfred<sup>164</sup> and Shakespeare.

I hear therefore with joy whatever is beginning to be said of the dignity and necessity of labor to every citizen.<sup>165</sup> There is virtue yet in the hoe and the spade, for learned as well as for unlearned hands. And labor is everywhere welcome; always we are invited to work; only be this limitation observed, that a man shall not for the sake of wider activity sacrifice any opinion to the popular judgments and modes of action.<sup>166</sup>

I have now spoken of the education of the scholar by nature, by books, and by action. It remains to say somewhat of his duties.

They are such as become Man Thinking. They may all be comprised in self-trust. The office of the scholar is to cheer, to raise, and to guide men by showing them facts amidst appearances. He plies the slow, unhonored, and unpaid task of observation. Flamsteed<sup>167</sup> and Herschel,<sup>168</sup> in their glazed observatories, may catalogue the stars with the praise of all men, and the results being splendid and useful, honor is sure. But he, in his private observatory, cataloguing obscure and nebulous stars of the human mind, which as yet no man has thought of as such,—watching days and months sometimes for a few facts; correcting still his old records;—must relinquish display and immediate fame. In the long period of his preparation he must betray often an ignorance and shiftlessness in popular arts, incurring the disdain of the able who shoulder him aside. Long he must stammer in his speech; often forego the living for the dead. Worse yet, he must accept—how often!—poverty and solitude. For the ease and pleasure of treading the old road, accepting the fashions, the education, the religion of society, he takes the cross of making his own, and, of course, the self-accusation, the faint heart, the frequent uncertainty and loss of time, which are the nettles and tangling vines in the way of the self-relying and self-directed; and the state of virtual hostility in which he seems to stand to society, and especially to educated society. For all this loss and scorn, what offset? He is to find con-

<sup>160</sup> A phrase quoted from Isaac Newton's *Opticks* (1704), bk. III. See especially propositions xi–xiii.

<sup>161</sup> Ungifted, unskilled.

<sup>162</sup> Celtic priests of primitive times.

<sup>163</sup> Hard-fighting Norse warriors.

<sup>164</sup> Alfred the Great, king of England (848?–901).

<sup>165</sup> At Brook Farm an earnest effort was made to combine physical with intellectual labor.

<sup>166</sup> Thomas Carlyle, Emerson's friend and correspondent, was also preaching a “gospel of work.”

<sup>167</sup> John Flamsteed (1646–1719), a British astronomer.

<sup>168</sup> Sir Frederick William Herschel (1738–1822), a British astronomer.



solation in exercising the highest functions of human nature. He is one who raises himself from private considerations and breathes and lives on public and illustrious thoughts. He is the world's eye. He is the world's heart. He is to resist the vulgar prosperity that retrogrades ever to barbarism, by preserving and communicating heroic sentiments, noble biographies, melodious verse, and the conclusions of history. Whatsoever oracles the human heart, in all emergencies, in all solemn hours, has uttered as its commentary on the world of actions,—these he shall receive and impart. And whatsoever new verdict Reason from her inviolable seat pronounces on the passing men and events of to-day,—this he shall hear and promulgate.

These being his functions, it becomes him to feel all confidence in himself, and to defer never to the popular cry. He and he only knows the world. The world of any moment is the merest appearance. Some great decorum, some fetish of a government, some ephemeral trade, or war, or man, is cried up by half mankind and cried down by the other half, as if all depended on this particular up or down. The odds are that the whole question is not worth the poorest thought which the scholar has lost in listening to the controversy. Let him not quit his belief that a popgun is a popgun, though the ancient and honorable of the earth affirm it to be the crack of doom. In silence, in steadiness, in severe abstraction, let him hold by himself; add observation to observation, 30 patient of neglect, patient of reproach, and bide his own time,—happy enough if he can satisfy himself alone that this day he has seen something truly. Success treads on every right step. For the instinct is sure, that prompts him to tell his brother what he thinks. He then learns that in going down into the secrets of his own mind he has descended into the secrets of all minds. He learns that he who has mastered any law in his private thoughts, is master to that extent of all men whose language he speaks, and of all into whose language his own can be translated. The poet, in utter solitude remembering his spontaneous thoughts and recording them, is found to have recorded that which men in crowded cities find true for them also. The orator distrusts at first the fitness of his frank confessions, his want of knowledge of the persons he addresses, until he finds that he is the complement of his hearers;—that they drink his words because he fulfils for them their own nature;

the deeper he dives into his privatest, secretest presentiment, to his wonder he finds this is the most acceptable, most public, and universally true. The people delight in it; the better part of every man feels, This is my music; this is myself.

In self-trust all the virtues are comprehended. Free should the scholar be,—free and brave. Free even to the definition of freedom, “without any hindrance that does not arise out of his own constitution.” 10 Brave; for fear is a thing which a scholar by his very function puts behind him. Fear always springs from ignorance. It is a shame to him if his tranquillity, amid dangerous times, arise from the presumption that like children and women his is a protected class; or if he seek a temporary peace by the diversion of his thoughts from politics or vexed questions, hiding his head like an ostrich in the flowering bushes, peeping into microscopes, and turning rhymes, as a boy whistles to keep his courage up. So is the danger a danger still; so is the fear worse. Manlike let him turn and face it. Let him look into his eye and search its nature, inspect its origin,—see the whelping of this lion,—which lies no great way back; he will then find in himself a perfect comprehension of its nature and extent; he will have made his hands meet on the other side, and can henceforth defy it and pass on superior. The world is his who can see through its pretension. What deafness, what stone-blind custom, what overgrown error you behold is there only by sufferance,—by your sufferance. See it to be a lie, and you have already dealt it its mortal blow.

Yes, we are the cowed,—we the trustless. It is a mischievous notion that we are come late into nature; that the world was finished a long time ago. As the world was plastic and fluid in the hands of God, so it is ever to so much of his attributes as we bring to it. To ignorance and sin, it is flint. They adapt themselves to it as they may; but in proportion as a man has any thing in him divine, the firmament flows before him and takes his signet and form. Not he is great who can alter matter, but he who can alter my state of mind. They are the kings of the world who give the color of their present thought to all nature and all art, and persuade men by the cheerful serenity of their carrying the matter, that this thing which they do is the apple which the ages have desired to pluck, now at last ripe, and inviting nations to the harvest. The great man makes the great thing.



Wherever Macdonald <sup>169</sup> sits, there is the head of the table. Linnæus <sup>170</sup> makes botany the most alluring of studies, and wins it from the farmer and the herb-woman; Davy, <sup>171</sup> chemistry; and Cuvier, <sup>172</sup> fossils. The day is always his who works in it with serenity and great aims. The unstable estimates of men crowd to him whose mind is filled with a truth, as the heaped waves of the Atlantic follow the moon.

For this self-trust, the reason is deeper than can be fathomed,—darker than can be enlightened. I might not carry with me the feeling of my audience in stating my own belief. But I have already shown the ground of my hope, in adverting to the doctrine that man is one. I believe man has been wronged; he has wronged himself. He has almost lost the light that can lead him back to his prerogatives. Men are become of no account. Men in history, men in the world of to-day, are bugs, are spawn, and are called "the mass" and "the herd." In a century, in a millennium, one or two men; that is to say, one or two approximations to the right state of every man. All the rest behold in the hero or the poet their own green and crude being,—ripened; yes, and are content to be less, so *that* may attain to its full stature. What a testimony, full of grandeur, full of pity, is borne to the demands of his own nature, by the poor clansman, the poor partisan, who rejoices in the glory of his chief. The poor and the low find some amends to their immense moral capacity, for their acquiescence in a political and social inferiority. They are content to be brushed like flies from the path of a great person, so that justice shall be done by him to that common nature which it is the dearest desire of all to see enlarged and glorified. They sun themselves in the great man's light, and feel it to be their own element. They cast the dignity of man from their downtrodden selves upon the shoulders of a hero, and will perish to add one drop of blood to make that great heart beat, those giant sinews combat and conquer. He lives for us, and we live in him.

Men, such as they are, very naturally seek money or power; and power because it is as good as money,—the "spoils," so called, "of office." <sup>173</sup> And why not? for they aspire to the highest, and this, in their sleep-walking, they dream is highest. Wake them and

they shall quit the false good and leap to the true, and leave governments to clerks and desks. This revolution is to be wrought by the gradual domestication of the idea of Culture. The main enterprise of the world for splendor, for extent, is the upbuilding of a man. Here are the materials strewn along the ground. The private life of one man shall be a more illustrious monarchy, more formidable to its enemy, more sweet and serene in its influence to its friend, than any kingdom in history. For a man, rightly viewed, comprehendeth the particular natures of all men. Each philosopher, each bard, each actor has only done for me, as by a delegate, what one day I can do for myself. The books which once we valued more than the apple of the eye, we have quite exhausted. What is that but saying that we have come up with the point of view which the universal mind took through the eyes of one scribe; we have been that man, and have passed on. First, one, then another, we drain all cisterns, and waxing greater by all these supplies, we crave a better and more abundant food. The man has never lived that can feed us ever. The human mind cannot be enshrined in a person who shall set a barrier on any one side to this unbounded, unboundable empire. It is one central fire, which, flaming now out of the lips of Etna, lightens the capes of Sicily, and now out of the throat of Vesuvius, illuminates the towers and vineyards of Naples. It is one light which beams out of a thousand stars. It is one soul which animates all men.

But I have dwelt perhaps tediously upon this abstraction of the Scholar. I ought not to delay longer to add what I have to say of nearer reference to the time and to this country.

Historically, there is thought to be a difference in the ideas which predominate over successive epochs, and there are data for marking the genius of the Classic, of the Romantic, and now of the Reflective or Philosophical age. With the views I have intimated of the oneness or the identity of the mind through all individuals, I do not much dwell on these differences. In fact, I believe each individual passes through all three. The boy is a Greek; the youth, romantic; the adult, reflective. I deny not, however,

<sup>172</sup> Georges Léopold Chrétien Frédéric Dagobert, Baron de Cuvier (1759–1832), a French scientist.

<sup>173</sup> The spoils system of awarding offices as political patronage, made notorious by Jackson's policy, "To the victor belong the spoils."

<sup>169</sup> Apparently a modification of a sentence uttered by Sancho Panza in *Don Quixote*, pt. II, chap. xxxi.

<sup>170</sup> Carolus Linnaeus (1707–78), a Swedish botanist.

<sup>171</sup> Sir Humphrey Davy (1778–1829), an English chemist.

that a revolution in the leading idea may be distinctly enough traced.

Our age is bewailed as the age of Introversion. Must that needs be evil? We, it seems, are critical; we are embarrassed with second thoughts; we cannot enjoy any thing for hankering to know whereof the pleasure consists; we are lined with eyes; we see with our feet; the time is infected with Hamlet's unhappiness,—

"Sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought." <sup>174</sup>

It is so bad then? Sight is the last thing to be pitied. Would we be blind? Do we fear lest we should out-see nature and God, and drink truth dry? I look upon the discontent of the literary class as a mere announcement of the fact that they find themselves not in the state of mind of their fathers, and regret the coming state as untried; as a boy dreads the water before he has learned that he can swim. If there is any period one would desire to be born in, <sup>20</sup> is it not the age of Revolution; when the old and the new stand side by side and admit of being compared; when the energies of all men are searched by fear and by hope; when the historic glories of the old can be compensated by the rich possibilities of the new era? This time, like all times, is a very good one, if we but know what to do with it.

I read with some joy of the auspicious signs of the coming days, as they glimmer already through poetry and art, through philosophy and science, through <sup>30</sup> church and state.

One of these signs is the fact that the same movement which effected the elevation of what was called the lowest class in the state, assumed in literature a very marked and as benign an aspect. Instead of the sublime and beautiful, the near, the low, the common, was explored and poetized. That which had been negligently trodden under foot by those who were harnessing and provisioning themselves for long journeys into far countries, is suddenly found to be <sup>40</sup> richer than all foreign parts. The literature of the poor, the feelings of the child, the philosophy of the street, the meaning of household life, are the topics of the time. It is a great stride. It is a sign—is it not?—of new vigor when the extremities are made active, when currents of warm life run into the hands and the feet. I ask not for the great, the remote, the romantic; what is doing in Italy or Arabia; what is

<sup>174</sup> *Hamlet*, III, i, 85.

Greek art, or Provençal minstrelsy; <sup>175</sup> I embrace the common, I explore and sit at the feet of the familiar, the low. Give me insight into to-day, and you may have the antique and future worlds. What would we really know the meaning of? The meal in the firkin; <sup>176</sup> the milk in the pan; the ballad in the street; the news of the boat; the glance of the eye; the form and the gait of the body;—show me the ultimate reason of these matters; show me the sublime presence of the highest spiritual cause lurking, as always it does lurk, in these suburbs and extremities of nature; let me see every trifle bristling with the polarity that ranges it instantly on an eternal law; and the shop, the plough, and the ledger referred to the like cause by which light undulates and poets sing;—and the world lies no longer a dull miscellany and lumber-room, but has form and order; there is no trifle, there is no puzzle, but one design unites and animates the farthest pinnacle and the <sup>20</sup> lowest trench.

This idea has inspired the genius of Goldsmith, Burns, Cowper, and, in a newer time, of Goethe, Wordsworth, and Carlyle. This idea they have differently followed and with various success. In contrast with their writing, the style of Pope, of Johnson, of Gibbon, looks cold and pedantic. This writing is blood-warm. Man is surprised to find that things near are not less beautiful and wondrous than things remote. The near explains the far. The drop is a small ocean. A man is related to all nature. This perception of the worth of the vulgar is fruitful in discoveries. Goethe, in this very thing the most modern of the moderns, has shown us, as none ever did, the genius of the ancients.

There is one man of genius who has done much for this philosophy of life, whose literary value has never yet been rightly estimated;—I mean Emanuel Swedenborg. The most imaginative of men, yet writing with the precision of a mathematician, he endeavored to engraft a purely philosophical Ethics on the popular Christianity of his time. Such an attempt of course must have difficulty which no genius could surmount. But he saw and showed the connection between nature and the affections of the soul. He pierced the emblematic or spiritual character of the visible, audible, tangible world. Especially did his shade-loving muse hover over and interpret the lower

<sup>175</sup> The lyric poetry of the troubadours.

<sup>176</sup> A small cask or container of meal.

parts of nature; he showed the mysterious bond that allies moral evil to the foul material forms, and has given in epical parables a theory of insanity, of beasts, of unclean and fearful things.

Another sign of our times, also marked by an analogous political movement, is the new importance given to the single person. Every thing that tends to insulate the individual,—to surround him with barriers of natural respect, so that each man shall feel the world is his, and man shall treat with man as a sovereign state with a sovereign state,—tends to true union as well as greatness. “I learned,” said the melancholy Pestalozzi,<sup>177</sup> “that no man in God’s wide earth is either willing or able to help any other man.” Help must come from the bosom alone. The scholar is that man who must take up into himself all the ability of the time, all the contributions of the past, all the hopes of the future. He must be an university of knowledges. If there be one lesson more than another which should pierce his ear, it is, The world is nothing, the man is all; in yourself is the law of all nature, and you know not yet how a globule of sap ascends; in yourself slumbers the whole of Reason: it is for you to know all; it is for you to dare all. Mr. President and Gentlemen, this confidence in the unsearched might of man belongs, by all motives, by all prophecy, by all preparation, to the American Scholar. We have listened too long to the courtly muses of Europe. The spirit of the American freeman is already suspected to be timid, imitative, tame. Public and private avarice make the air we breathe thick and fat. The scholar is decent, indolent, complaisant. See already the tragic consequences. The mind of this country, taught to aim at low objects, eats upon itself. There is no work for any but the

decorous and the complaisant. Young men of the fairest promise, who begin life upon our shores, inflated by the mountain winds, shined upon by all the stars of God, find the earth below not in unison with these, but are hindered from action by the disgust which the principles on which business is managed inspire, and turn drudges, or die of disgust, some of them suicides. What is the remedy? They did not yet see, and thousands of young men as hopeful now crowding to the barriers for the career do not yet see, that if the single man plant himself indomitably on his instincts, and there abide, the huge world will come round to him. Patience,—patience; with the shades of all the good and great for company; and for solace the perspective of your own infinite life; and for work the study and the communication of principles, the making of those instincts prevalent, the conversion of the world. Is it not the chief disgrace in the world, not to be an unit;—not to be reckoned one character;—not to yield that peculiar fruit which each man was created to bear, but to be reckoned in the gross, in the hundred, or the thousand, of the party, the section, to which we belong; and our opinion predicted geographically, as the north, or the south? Not so, brothers and friends—please God, ours shall not be so. We will walk on our own feet; we will work with our own hands; we will speak our own minds. The study of letters shall be no longer a name for pity, for doubt, and for sensual indulgence. The dread of man and the love of man shall be a wall of defence and a wreath of joy around all. A nation of men will for the first time exist, because each believes himself inspired by the Divine Soul which also inspires all men.

1837

### *Self-Reliance*

“Ne te quæsieris extra.”<sup>178</sup>

“Man is his own star; and the soul that can  
Render an honest and a perfect man  
Commands all light, all influence, all fate;  
Nothing to him falls early or too late.  
Our acts our angels are, or good or ill,  
Our fatal shadows that walk by us still.”

EPILOGUE TO BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER’S  
*Honest Man’s Fortune*

Cast the bantling on the rocks,  
Suckle him with the she-wolf’s teat,  
Wintered with the hawk and fox,  
Power and speed be hands and feet.<sup>179</sup>

I read the other day some verses written by an eminent painter<sup>180</sup> which were original and not conventional. The soul always hears an admonition in

<sup>177</sup> Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi (1746–1827), a noted Swiss educational reformer.

<sup>178</sup> “Do not seek outside yourself.”

<sup>179</sup> Emerson’s own verses.

<sup>180</sup> Believed to be a reference to Washington Allston (1779–1843), painter, poet, and novelist.

such lines, let the subject be what it may. The sentiment they instil is of more value than any thought they may contain. To believe your own thought, to believe that what is true for you in your private heart is true for all men,—that is genius. Speak your latent conviction, and it shall be the universal sense; for the inmost in due time becomes the outmost, and our first thought is rendered back to us by the trumpets of the Last Judgment. Familiar as the voice of the mind is to each, the highest merit we ascribe to Moses, Plato and Milton is that they set at naught books and traditions, and spoke not what men, but what *they* thought. A man should learn to detect and watch that gleam of light which flashes across his mind from within, more than the lustre of the firmament of bards and sages. Yet he dismisses without notice his thought, because it is his. In every work of genius we recognize our own rejected thoughts; they come back to us with a certain alienated majesty. Great works of art have no more affecting lesson for us than this. They teach us to abide by our spontaneous impression with good-humored inflexibility then most when the whole cry of voices is on the other side. Else to-morrow a stranger will say with masterly good sense precisely what we have thought and felt all the time, and we shall be forced to take with shame our own opinion from another.

There is a time in every man's education when he arrives at the conviction that envy is ignorance; that imitation is suicide; that he must take himself for better for worse as his portion; that though the wide universe is full of good, no kernel of nourishing corn can come to him but through his toil bestowed on that plot of ground which is given to him to till. The power which resides in him is new in nature, and none but he knows what that is which he can do, nor does he know until he has tried. Not for nothing one face, one character, one fact, makes much impression on him, and another none. This sculpture in the memory is not without preëstablished harmony. The eye was placed where one ray should fall, that it might testify of that particular ray. We but half express ourselves, and are ashamed of that divine idea which each of us represents. It may be safely trusted as proportionate and of good issues, so it be faithfully imparted, but God will not have his

work made manifest by cowards. A man is relieved and gay when he has put his heart into his work and done his best; but what he has said or done otherwise shall give him no peace. It is a deliverance which does not deliver. In the attempt his genius deserts him; no muse befriends; no invention, no hope.

Trust thyself: every heart vibrates to that iron string. Accept the place the divine providence has found for you, the society of your contemporaries, the connection of events. Great men have always done so, and confided themselves childlike to the genius<sup>181</sup> of their age, betraying their perception that the absolutely trustworthy was seated at their heart, working through their hands, predominating in all their being. And we are now men, and must accept in the highest mind the same transcendent destiny; and not minors and invalids in a protected corner, not cowards fleeing before a revolution, but guides, redeemers and benefactors, obeying the Almighty effort and advancing on Chaos and the Dark.<sup>182</sup>

What pretty oracles nature yields us on this text in the face and behavior of children, babes, and even brutes! That divided and rebel mind, that distrust of a sentiment because our arithmetic has computed the strength and means opposed to our purpose, these have not. Their mind being whole, their eye is as yet unconquered, and when we look in their faces we are disconcerted. Infancy conforms to nobody; all conform to it; so that one babe commonly makes four or five out of the adults who prattle and play to it. So God has armed youth and puberty and manhood no less with its own piquancy and charm, and made it enviable and gracious and its claims not to be put by, if it will stand by itself. Do not think the youth has no force, because he cannot speak to you and me. Hark! in the next room his voice is sufficiently clear and emphatic. It seems he knows how to speak to his contemporaries. Bashful or bold then, he will know how to make us seniors very unnecessary.

The nonchalance of boys who are sure of a dinner, and would disdain as much as a lord to do or say aught to conciliate one, is the healthy attitude of human nature. A boy is in the parlor what the pit<sup>183</sup> is in the playhouse; independent, irresponsible,

<sup>181</sup> That is, spirit of their age.

<sup>182</sup> See Milton's "Chaos and Old Night," in *Paradise Lost*, I, 543.

<sup>183</sup> Nowadays known as the orchestra. In Elizabethan days it was the cheapest location in the house occupied by the "groundlings."

looking out from his corner on such people and facts as pass by, he tries and sentences them on their merits, in the swift, summary way of boys, as good, bad, interesting, silly, eloquent, troublesome. He cumbers himself never about consequences, about interests; he gives an independent, genuine verdict. You must court him; he does not court you. But the man is as it were clapped into jail by his consciousness. As soon as he has once acted or spoken with *éclat* <sup>184</sup> he is a committed person, watched by the sympathy or the hatred of hundreds, whose affections must now enter into his account. There is no Lethe <sup>185</sup> for this. Ah, that he could pass again into his neutrality! Who can thus avoid all pledges and, having observed, observe again from the same unaffected, unbiased, unbribable, unafrighted innocence,—must always be formidable. He would utter opinions on all passing affairs, which being seen to be not private but necessary, would sink like darts into the ear of men and put them in fear.

These are the voices which we hear in solitude, but they grow faint and inaudible as we enter into the world. Society everywhere is in conspiracy against the manhood of every one of its members. Society is a joint-stock company, in which the members agree, for the better securing of his bread to each shareholder, to surrender the liberty and culture of the eater. The virtue in most request is conformity. Self-reliance is its aversion. It loves not realities and creators, but names and customs.

Whoso would be a man, must be a nonconformist. He who would gather immortal palms <sup>186</sup> must not be hindered by the name of goodness, but must explore if it be goodness. Nothing is at last sacred but the integrity of your own mind. Absolve you to yourself, and you shall have the suffrage of the world. I remember an answer which when quite young I was prompted to make to a valued adviser who was wont to importune me with the dear old doctrines of the church. On my saying, "What have I to do with the sacredness of traditions, if I live wholly from within?" my friend suggested.—"But these impulses may be from below, not from above." I replied, "They do not seem to me to be such; but if I am

the Devil's child, I will live then from the Devil." <sup>187</sup> No law can be sacred to me but that of my nature. Good and bad are but names very readily transferable to that or this; the only right is what is after my constitution; the only wrong what is against it. A man is to carry himself in the presence of all opposition as if every thing were titular <sup>188</sup> and ephemeral but he. I am ashamed to think how easily we capitulate to badges and names, to large societies and dead institutions. Every decent and well-spoken individual affects and sways me more than is right. I ought to go upright and vital, and speak the rude truth in all ways. If malice and vanity wear the coat of philanthropy, shall that pass? If an angry bigot assumes this bountiful cause of Abolition, and comes to me with his last news from Barbadoes, <sup>189</sup> why should I not say to him, "Go love thy infant; love thy wood-chopper; be good-natured and modest; have that grace; and never varnish your hard, uncharitable ambition with this incredible tenderness for black folk a thousand miles off. Thy love afar is spite at home." Rough and graceless would be such greeting, but truth is handsomer than the affectation of love. Your goodness must have some edge to it,—else it is none. The doctrine of hatred must be preached, as the counteraction of the doctrine of love, when that pulses and whines. I shun father and mother <sup>190</sup> and wife and brother when my genius calls me. I would write on the lintels <sup>191</sup> of the door-post, <sup>192</sup> *Whim*. <sup>193</sup> I hope it is somewhat better than whim at last, but we cannot spend the day in explanation. Expect me not to show cause why I seek or why I exclude company. Then again, do not tell me, as a good man did to-day, of my obligation to put all poor men in good situations. Are they *my* poor? I tell thee, thou foolish philanthropist, that I grudge the dollar, the dime, the cent I give to such men as do not belong to me and to whom I do not belong. There is a class of persons to whom by all spiritual affinity I am bought and sold; for them I will go to prison if need be; but your miscellaneous popular charities; the education at college of fools; the building of meeting-houses to the vain end to which many now stand; alms to sots, and

<sup>189</sup> Slavery was legally abolished in Barbadoes, an island in the West Indies, in 1834.

<sup>190</sup> See Matthew 10:37.

<sup>191</sup> The cross piece above a door.

<sup>192</sup> Reminiscent of Exodus 12:7.

<sup>193</sup> Not "whim" in the usual sense of freakish behavior or caprice, but rather of personal genius, individual personality, inner urge.

<sup>184</sup> Brilliance, finality.

<sup>185</sup> A river of Hades whose water when drunk caused forgetfulness of the past—hence, forgetfulness.

<sup>186</sup> Symbolic of triumph or success.

<sup>187</sup> Emerson here pushes the doctrine of self-trust to a conclusion from which many conservatives were repelled.

<sup>188</sup> Existing in name, or appearance, only.

the thousand-fold Relief Societies;—though I confess with shame I sometimes succumb and give the dollar, it is a wicked dollar, which by and by I shall have the manhood to withhold.<sup>194</sup>

Virtues are, in the popular estimate, rather the exception than the rule. There is the man *and* his virtues. Men do what is called a good action, as some piece of courage or charity, much as they would pay a fine in expiation of daily non-appearance on parade. Their works are done as an apology or extenuation <sup>10</sup> of their living in the world,—as invalids and the insane pay a high board. Their virtues are penances. I do not wish to expiate, but to live. My life is for itself and not for a spectacle. I much prefer that it should be of a lower strain, so it be genuine and equal, than that it should be glittering and unsteady. I wish it to be sound and sweet, and not to need diet and bleeding. I ask primary evidence that you are a man, and refuse this appeal from the man to his actions. I know that for myself it makes no difference whether I do or <sup>20</sup> forbear those actions which are reckoned excellent. I cannot consent to pay for a privilege where I have intrinsic right. Few and mean as my gifts may be, I actually am, and do not need for my own assurance or the assurance of my fellows any secondary testimony.

What I must do is all that concerns me, not what the people think. This rule, equally arduous in actual and in intellectual life, may serve for the whole distinction between greatness and meanness. It is the <sup>30</sup> harder because you will always find those who think they know what is your duty better than you know it. It is easy in the world to live after the world's opinion; it is easy in solitude to live after our own; but the great man is he who in the midst of the crowd keeps with perfect sweetness the independence of solitude.

The objection to conforming to usages that have become dead to you is that it scatters your force. It loses your time and blurs the impression of your character. If you maintain a dead church, contribute to a dead Bible-society, vote with a great party either for the government or against it, spread your table like base housekeepers,—under all these screens I have difficulty to detect the precise man you are: and of course so much force is withdrawn from your proper

<sup>194</sup> An expression of Emerson's lack of faith in wholesale reform movements or organized alms giving. Reform, for Emerson, was an individual matter. He was motivated less by humanitarianism than humanism.

life. But do your work, and I shall know you. Do your work and you shall reinforce yourself. A man must consider what a blind-man's-buff is this game of conformity. If I know your sect I anticipate your argument. I hear a preacher announce for his text and topic the expediency of one of the institutions of his church. Do I not know beforehand that not possibly can he say a new and spontaneous word? Do I not know that with all this ostentation of examining the grounds of the institution he will do no such thing? Do I not know that he is pledged to himself not to look but at one side, the permitted side, not as a man, but as a parish minister? He is a retained attorney, and these airs of the bench are the emptiest affectation. Well, most men have bound their eyes with one or another handkerchief, and attached themselves to some one of these communities of opinion. This conformity makes them not false in a few particulars, authors of a few lies, but false in all particulars. Their every truth is not quite true. Their two is not the real two, their four not the real four; so that every word they say chagrins us and we know not where to begin to set them right. Meantime nature is not slow to equip us in the prison-uniform of the party to which we adhere. We come to wear one cut of face and figure, and acquire by degrees the gentlest asinine expression. There is a mortifying experience in particular, which does not fail to wreak itself also in the general history; I mean "the foolish face of praise," <sup>195</sup> the forced smile which we put on in company where we do not feel at ease, in answer to conversation which does not interest us. The muscles, not spontaneously moved but moved by a low usurping wilfulness, grow tight about the outline of the face, with the most disagreeable sensation.

For nonconformity the world whips you with its displeasure. And therefore a man must know how to estimate a sour face. The by-standers look askance on him in the public street or in the friend's parlor. If this aversion had its origin in contempt and resistance like his own he might well go home with a sad countenance; but the sour faces of the multitude, like their sweet faces, have no deep cause, but are put on and off as the wind blows and a newspaper directs. Yet is the discontent of the multitude more formidable than that of the senate and the college. It is easy enough for a firm man who knows the world to brook the rage of the cultivated classes.

<sup>195</sup> From Alexander Pope's *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*, l. 212.

Their rage is decorous and prudent, for they are timid, as being very vulnerable themselves. But when to their feminine rage the indignation of the people is added, when the ignorant and the poor are aroused, when the unintelligent brute force that lies at the bottom of society is made to growl and mow,<sup>196</sup> it needs the habit of magnanimity and religion to treat it godlike as a trifle of no concernment.

The other terror that scares us from self-trust is our consistency; a reverence for our past act or word because the eyes of others have no other data for computing our orbit than our past acts, and we are loth to disappoint them.

But why should you keep your head over your shoulder? Why drag about this corpse of your memory, lest you contradict somewhat you have stated in this or that public place? Suppose you should contradict yourself; what then? It seems to be a rule of wisdom never to rely on your memory alone, scarcely even in acts of pure memory, but to bring the past for judgment into the thousand-eyed present, and live ever in a new day. In your metaphysics you have denied personality to the Deity, yet when the devout motions of the soul come, yield to them heart and life, though they should clothe God with shape and color. Leave your theory, as Joseph<sup>197</sup> his coat in the hand of the harlot, and flee.

A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds,<sup>198</sup> adored by little statesmen and philosophers and divines. With consistency a great soul has simply nothing to do. He may as well concern himself with his shadow on the wall. Speak what you think now in hard words and to-morrow speak what to-morrow thinks in hard words again, though it contradict every thing you said to-day.—“Ah, so you shall be sure to be misunderstood.”—Is it so bad then to be misunderstood? Pythagoras<sup>199</sup> was misunderstood, and Socrates, and Jesus, and Luther, and Copernicus, and Galileo, and Newton, and every pure and wise spirit that ever took flesh. To be great is to be misunderstood.<sup>200</sup>

I suppose no man can violate his nature. All the

sallics of his will are rounded in by the law of his being, as the inequalities of Andes and Himmaleh<sup>201</sup> are insignificant in the curve of the sphere. Nor does it matter how you gauge and try him. A character is like an acrostic<sup>202</sup> or Alexandrian<sup>203</sup> stanza;—read it forward, backward, or across, it still spells the same thing. In this pleasing contrite wood-life which God allows me, let me record day by day my honest thought without prospect or retrospect, and, I cannot doubt, it will be found symmetrical, though I mean it not and see it not. My book should smell of pines and resound with the hum of insects. The swallow over my window should interweave that thread or straw he carries in his bill into my web also. We pass for what we are. Character teaches above our wills. Men imagine that they communicate their virtue or vice only by overt actions, and do not see that virtue or vice emit a breath every moment.

There will be an agreement in whatever variety of actions, so they be each honest and natural in their hour. For of one will, the actions will be harmonious, however unlike they seem. These varieties are lost sight of at a little distance, at a little height of thought. One tendency unites them all. The voyage of the best ship is a zigzag line of a hundred tacks. See the line from a sufficient distance, and it straightens itself to the average tendency. Your genuine action will explain itself and will explain your other genuine actions. Your conformity explains nothing. Act singly, and what you have already done singly will justify you now. Greatness appeals to the future. If I can be firm enough to-day to do right and scorn eyes, I must have done so much right before as to defend me now. Be it how it will, do right now. Always scorn appearances and you always may. The force of character is cumulative. All the foregone days of virtue work their health into this. What makes the majesty of the heroes of the senate and the field, which so fills the imagination? The consciousness of a train of great days and victories behind. They shed a united light on the advancing actor. He is attended as by a visible escort of angels. That is it which throws thunder into Chatham's<sup>204</sup>

<sup>196</sup> To make a face, or grimace.

<sup>197</sup> See Genesis 39:12.

<sup>198</sup> Often quoted without the qualifying adjective *foolish*.

<sup>199</sup> When Pythagoras tried to establish a school in his native land of Samos, he was repudiated by his own people, and his followers were persecuted.

<sup>200</sup> Not the same as “To be misunderstood is to be great.”

<sup>201</sup> The Andes are on the west coast of South America and the Himalayas are a mountain system between India and Tibet.

<sup>202</sup> A composition, usually a poem, in which a set of letters, such as the first letters of successive lines, spell out names or words.

<sup>203</sup> A palindrome, or stanza, which makes sense whether read forward or backward. Not to be confused with an Alexandrine line, consisting of six iambic feet with a caesura, or pause, after the third.

<sup>204</sup> William Pitt, Earl of Chatham (1708–78).



voice, and dignity into Washhington's port,<sup>205</sup> and America into Adams's<sup>206</sup> eye. Honor is venerable to us because it is no ephemera. It is always ancient virtue. We worship it to-day because it is not of to-day. We love it and pay it homage because it is not a trap for our love and homage, but is self-dependent, self-derived, and therefore of an old immaculate pedigree, even if shown in a young person.

I hope in these days we have heard the last of conformity and consistency. Let the words be gazetted<sup>207</sup> 10 and ridiculous henceforward. Instead of the gong for dinner, let us hear a whistle from the Spartan fife.<sup>208</sup> Let us never bow and apologize more. A great man is coming to eat at my house. I do not wish to please him; I wish that he should wish to please me. I will stand here for humanity, and though I would make it kind, I would make it true. Let us affront and reprimand the smooth mediocrity and squalid contentment of the times, and hurl in the face of custom and trade and office, the fact which is the upshot of 20 all history, that there is a great responsible Thinker and Actor working wherever a man works; that a true man belongs to no other time or place, but is the centre of things. Where he is, there is nature. He measures you and all men and all events. Ordinarily, every body in society reminds us of somewhat else, or of some other person. Character, reality, reminds you of nothing else; it takes place of the whole creation. The man must be so much that he must make all circumstances indifferent. Every true man 30 is a cause, a country, and an age; requires infinite spaces and numbers and time fully to accomplish his design;—and posterity seem to follow his steps as a train of clients. A man Cæsar<sup>209</sup> is born, and for ages after we have a Roman Empire. Christ is born, and millions of minds so grow and cleave to his genius that he is confounded with virtue and the possible of man. An institution is the lengthened shadow of one man; as, Monachism,<sup>210</sup> of the Hermit

Antony;<sup>211</sup> the Reformation, of Luther;<sup>212</sup> Quakerism, of Fox;<sup>213</sup> Methodism, of Wesley;<sup>214</sup> Abolition, of Clarkson.<sup>215</sup> Scipio,<sup>216</sup> Milton called "the height of Rome;" and all history resolves itself very easily into the biography of a few stout and earnest persons.<sup>217</sup>

Let a man then know his worth, and keep things under his feet. Let him not peep or steal, or skulk up and down with the air of a charity-boy, a bastard, or an interloper in the world which exists for him. But the man in the street, finding no worth in himself which corresponds to the force which built a tower or sculptured a marble god, feels poor when he looks on these. To him a palace, a statue, or a costly book have an alien and forbidding air, much like a gay equipage, and seem to say like that, "Who are you, Sir?" Yet they all are his, suitors for his notice, petitioners to his faculties that they will come out and take possession. The picture waits for my verdict; it is not to command me, but I am to settle its claims to praise. That popular fable<sup>218</sup> of the sot who was picked up dead-drunk in the street, carried to the duke's house, washed and dressed and laid in the duke's bed, and, on his waking, treated with all obsequious ceremony like the duke, and assured that he had been insane, owes its popularity to the fact that it symbolizes so well the state of man, who is in the world a sort of sot,<sup>219</sup> but now and then wakes up, exercises his reason and finds himself a true 30 prince.

Our reading is mendicant and sycophantic. In history our imagination plays us false. Kingdom and lordship, power and estate, are a gaudier vocabulary than private John and Edward in a small house and common day's work; but the things of life are the same to both; the sum total of both is the same. Why all this deference to Alfred and Scanderbeg<sup>220</sup> and Gustavus?<sup>221</sup> Suppose they were virtu-

<sup>205</sup> Bearing.

<sup>206</sup> Probably John Adams (1735-1826), or Samuel Adams (1722-1803).

<sup>207</sup> An officer whose resignation is announced in a gazette is said to be gazetted, or gazetted out.

<sup>208</sup> The only music permitted in ancient Sparta.

<sup>209</sup> Julius Cæsar (100-44 B.C.), or Caius Julius Cæsar Octavianus, known as Cæsar Augustus (63 B.C.-A.D. 14).

<sup>210</sup> Monasticism.

<sup>211</sup> St. Anthony (250-300?), the first Christian monk.

<sup>212</sup> Martin Luther (1483-1546), father of the Reformation.

<sup>213</sup> George Fox (1624-91), founder of the Society of Friends (Quakers).

<sup>214</sup> John Wesley (1703-91), founder of Methodism.

<sup>215</sup> Thomas Clarkson (1760-1846), English philanthropist and abolitionist.

<sup>216</sup> Scipio Africanus Major (237?-183 B.C.), a Roman general who destroyed Carthage. Emerson's reference is to Milton's *Paradise Lost*, bk. ix, l. 510.

<sup>217</sup> See Carlyle's opening statement in *Heroes and Hero-Worship* (1841): "For, as I take it, Universal History, the history of what man has accomplished in this world, is at bottom the History of the Great Men who have worked here."

<sup>218</sup> See the Induction to Shakespeare's *Taming of the Shrew*.

<sup>219</sup> Cf. the Sphinx's condemnation of man in "The Sphinx."

<sup>220</sup> George Castriota (1403-68), an Albanian patriot, known as Scanderbeg.

<sup>221</sup> Gustavus Vasa (1496-1560) or Gustavus Adolphus (1594-1632), both kings of Sweden.



ous; did they wear out virtue? As great a stake depends on your private act to-day as followed their public and renowned steps. When private men shall act with original views, the lustre will be transferred from the actions of kings to those of gentlemen.

The world has been instructed by its kings, who have so magnetized the eyes of nations. It has been taught by this colossal symbol the mutual reverence that is due from man to man. The joyful loyalty with which men have everywhere suffered the king, the noble, or the great proprietor to walk among them by a law of his own, make his own scale of men and things and reverse theirs, pay for benefits not with money but with honor, and represent the law in his person, was the hieroglyphic by which they obscurely signified their consciousness of their own right and comeliness, the right of every man.

The magnetism which all original action exerts is explained when we inquire the reason of self-trust. Who is the Trustee? What is the aboriginal Self, on which a universal reliance may be grounded? What is the nature and power of that science-baffling star, without parallax,<sup>222</sup> without calculable elements, which shoots a ray of beauty even into trivial and impure actions, if the least mark of independence appear? The inquiry leads us to that source, at once the essence of genius, of virtue, and of life, which we call Spontaneity or Instinct. We denote this primary wisdom as Intuition, whilst all later teachings are tuitions. In that deep force, the last fact behind which analysis cannot go, all things find their common origin. For the sense of being which in calm hours arises, we know not how, in the soul, is not diverse from things, from space, from light, from time, from man, but one with them and proceeds obviously from the same source whence their life and being also proceed. We first share the life by which things exist and afterwards see them as appearances in nature and forget that we have shared their cause. Here is the fountain of action and of thought. Here are the lungs of that inspiration which giveth man wisdom and which cannot be denied without impiety and atheism. We lie in the lap of immense intelligence, which makes us receivers of its truth and organs of its activity. When we discern justice, when we discern truth, we do nothing of

ourselves, but allow a passage to its beams. If we ask whence this comes, if we seek to pry into the soul that causes, all philosophy is at fault. Its presence or its absence is all we can affirm. Every man discriminates between the voluntary acts of his mind and his involuntary perceptions, and knows that to his involuntary perceptions a perfect faith is due. He may err in the expression of them, but he knows that these things are so, like day and night, not to be disputed. My wilful actions and acquisitions are but roving;—the idlest reverie, the faintest native emotion, command my curiosity and respect. Thoughtless people contradict as readily the statement of perceptions as of opinions, or rather much more readily; for they do not distinguish between perception and notion. They fancy that I choose to see this or that thing. But perception is not whimsical, but fatal. If I see a trait, my children will see it after me, and in course of time all mankind,—although it may chance that no one has seen it before me. For my perception of it is as much a fact as the sun.

The relations of the soul to the divine spirit are so pure that it is profane to seek to interpose helps. It must be that when God speaketh he should communicate, not one thing, but all things; should fill the world with his voice; should scatter forth light, nature, time, souls, from the centre of the present thought; and new date and new create the whole. Whenever a mind is simple and receives a divine wisdom, old things pass away,—means, teachers, texts, temples fall; it lives now, and absorbs past and future into the present hour. All things are made sacred by relation to it,—one as much as another. All things are dissolved to their centre by their cause, and in the universal miracle petty and particular miracles disappear. If therefore a man claims to know and speak of God and carries you backward to the phraseology of some old mouldered nation in another country, in another world, believe him not. Is the acorn better than the oak which is its fulness and completion? Is the parent better than the child into whom he has cast his ripened being? Whence then this worship of the past? The centuries are conspirators against the sanity and authority of the soul. Time and space are but physiological colors which the eye makes, but the soul is light: where it is, is day; where it was, is night; and history is an impertinence and an injury if it be any thing more than

<sup>222</sup> The difference in apparent direction or position of an object, such as a star, as seen from two different points.

a cheerful apologue<sup>223</sup> or parable of my being and becoming.

Man is timid and apologetic; he is no longer upright; he dares not say "I think," "I am," but quotes some saint or sage. He is ashamed before the blade of grass or the blowing rose. These roses under my window make no reference to former roses or to better ones; they are for what they are; they exist with God to-day. There is no time to them. There is simply the rose; it is perfect in every moment of its existence. Before a leaf-bud has burst, its whole life acts; in the full-blown flower there is no more; in the leafless root there is no less. Its nature is satisfied and it satisfies nature in all moments alike. But man postpones or remembers; he does not live in the present, but with reverted eye laments the past, or, heedless of the riches that surround him, stands on tiptoe to foresee the future. He cannot be happy and strong until he too lives with nature in the present, above time.

This should be plain enough. Yet see what strong intellects dare not yet hear God himself unless he speak the phrasology of I know not what David, or Jeremiah, or Paul. We shall not always set so great a price on a few texts, on a few lives. We are like children who repeat by rote the sentences of grandames and tutors, and, as they grow older, of the men of talents and character they chance to see,—painfully recollecting the exact words they spoke; afterwards, when they come into the point of view<sup>30</sup> which those had who uttered these sayings, they understand them and are willing to let the words go; for at any time they can use words as good when occasion comes. If we live truly, we shall see truly. It is as easy for the strong man to be strong, as it is for the weak to be weak. When we have new perception, we shall gladly disburden the memory of its hoarded treasures as old rubbish. When a man lives with God, his voice shall be as sweet as the murmur of the brook and the rustle of the corn.

And now at last the highest truth on his subject remains unsaid; probably cannot be said; for all that we say is the far-off remembering of the intuition. That thought by what I can now nearest approach to say it, is this. When good is near you, when you have life in yourself, it is not by any known or accustomed way; you shall not discern the footprints of

any other; you shall not see the face of man; you shall not hear any name;—the way, the thought, the good, shall be wholly strange and new. It shall exclude example and experience. You take the way from man, not to man. All persons that ever existed are its forgotten ministers. Fear and hope are alike beneath it. There is somewhat low even in hope. In the hour of vision there is nothing that can be called gratitude, nor properly joy. The soul raised over passion beholds identity and eternal causation, perceives the self-existence of Truth and Right, and calms itself with knowing that all things go well. Vast spaces of nature, the Atlantic Ocean, the South Sea; long intervals of time, years, centuries, are of no account. This which I think and feel underlay every former state of life and circumstances, as it does underlie my present, and what is called life and what is called death.

Life only avails, not the having lived. Power ceases in the instant of repose; it resides in the moment of transition from a past to a new state, in the shooting of the gulf, in the darting to an aim. This one fact the world hates; that the soul *becomes*; for that forever degrades the past, turns all riches to poverty, all reputation to a shame, confounds the saint with the rogue, shoves Jesus and Judas equally aside. Why then do we prate of self-reliance? Inasmuch as the soul is present there will be power not confident but agent. To talk of reliance is a poor external way of speaking. Speak rather of that which relies because it works and is. Who has more obedience than I masters me, though he should not raise his finger. Round him I must revolve by the gravitation of spirits. We fancy it rhetoric when we speak of eminent virtue. We do not yet see that virtue is Height, and that a man or a company of men, plastic and permeable to principles, by the law of nature must overpower and ride all cities, nations, kings, rich men, poets, who are not.

This is the ultimate fact which we so quickly reach<sup>40</sup> on this, as on every topic, the resolution of all into the ever-blessed ONE. Self-existence is the attribute of the Supreme Cause, and it constitutes the measure of good by the degree in which it enters into all lower forms. All things real are so by so much virtue as they contain. Commerce, husbandry, hunting, whaling, war, eloquence, personal weight, are somewhat, and engage my respect as examples of its presence and impure action. I see the same law work-

<sup>223</sup> A moral fable.

ing in nature for conservation and growth. Power is, in nature, the essential measure of right. Nature suffers nothing to remain in her kindoms which cannot help itself. The genesis and maturation of a planet, its poise and orbit, the bended tree recovering itself from the strong wind, the vital resources of every animal and vegetable, are demonstrations of the self-sufficing and therefore self-relying soul.

Thus all concentrates: let us not rove; let us sit at home with the cause. Let us stun and astonish the intruding rabble of men and books and institutions by a simple declaration of the divine fact. Bid the invaders take the shoes from off their feet,<sup>224</sup> for God is here within. Let our simplicity judge them, and our docility to our own law demonstrate the poverty of nature and fortune beside our native riches.

But now we are a mob. Man does not stand in awe of man, nor is his genius admonished to stay at home, to put itself in communication with the internal ocean, but it goes abroad to beg a cup of water of the urns of other men. We must go alone. I like the silent church before the service begins, better than any preaching.<sup>225</sup> How far off, how cool, how chaste the persons look, begirt each one with a precinct or sanctuary! So let us always sit. Why should we assume the faults of our friend, or wife, or father, or child, because they sit around our hearth, or are said to have the same blood? All men have my blood and I all men's. Not for that will I adopt their petulance or folly, even to the extent of being ashamed of it. But your isolation must not be mechanical, but spiritual, that is, must be elevation. At times the whole world seems to be in conspiracy to importune you with emphatic trifles. Friend, client, child, sickness, fear, want, charity, all knock at once at thy closet door and say.—“Come out unto us.” But keep thy state; come not into their confusion. The power men possess to annoy me I give them by a weak curiosity. No man can come near me but through my act. “What we love that we have, but by desire we bereave ourselves of the love.”

If we cannot at once rise to the sanctities of obedience and faith, let us at least resist our temptations; let us enter into the state of war and wake Thor<sup>226</sup> and Woden,<sup>227</sup> courage and constancy, in

our Saxon breasts. This is to be done in our smooth times by speaking the truth. Check this lying hospitality and lying affection. Live no longer to the expectation of these deceived and deceiving people with whom we converse. Say to them, “O father, O mother, O wife, O brother, O friend, I have lived with you after appearances hitherto. Henceforward I am the truth's. Be it known unto you that henceforward I obey no law less than the eternal law. I will have no covenants but proximities. I shall endeavor to nourish my parents, to support my family, to be the chaste husband of one wife,—but these relations I must fill after a new and unprecedented way. I appeal from your customs. I must be myself. I cannot break myself any longer for you, or you. If you can love me for what I am, we shall be the happier. If you cannot, I will still seek to deserve that you should. I will not hide my tastes or aversions. I will so trust that what is deep is holy, that I will do strongly before the sun and moon whatever inly rejoices me and the heart appoints. If you are noble, I will love you; if you are not, I will not hurt you and myself by hypocritical attentions. If you are true, but not in the same truth with me, cleave to your companions; I will seek my own. I do this not selfishly but humbly and truly. It is alike your interest, and mine, and all men's, however long we have dwelt in lies, to live in truth. Does this sound harsh to-day? You will soon love what is dictated by your nature as well as mine, and if we follow the truth it will bring us out safe at last.”—But so may you give these friends pain. Yes, but I cannot sell my liberty and my power, to save their sensibility. Besides, all persons have their moments of reason, when they look out into the region of absolute truth; then will they justify me and do the same thing.

The populous think that your rejection of popular standards is a rejection of all standard, and mere antinomianism;<sup>228</sup> and the bold sensualist will use the name of philosophy to gild his crimes. But the law of consciousness abides. There are two confessionals, in one or the other of which we must be shriven. You may fulfil your round of duties by clearing yourself in the *direct*, or in the *reflex* way. Consider whether you have satisfied your relations to father, mother, cousin, neighbor, town, cat and dog

<sup>224</sup> See Exodus 3:5.

<sup>225</sup> Cf. Emerson's poem, “The Problem.”

<sup>226</sup> The Norse god of war, thunder, and strength.

<sup>227</sup> The Teutonic god of war, wisdom, and poetry, like Odin of the Norse Eddas or mythology.

<sup>228</sup> The doctrine that faith alone is sufficient to achieve salvation and that the moral law may be disregarded.

—whether any of these can upbraid you. But I may also neglect this reflex standard and absolve me to myself. I have my own stern claims and perfect circle. It denies the name of duty to many offices that are called duties. But if I can discharge its debts it enables me to dispense with the popular code. If any one imagines that this law is lax, let him keep its commandment one day.

And truly it demands something godlike in him who has cast off the common motives of humanity<sup>10</sup> and has ventured to trust himself for a taskmaster. High be his heart, faithful his will, clear his sight, that he may in good earnest be doctrine, society, law, to himself, that a simple purpose may be to him as strong as iron necessity is to others!

If any man consider the present aspects of what is called by distinction *society*, he will see the need of these ethics. The sinew and heart of man seem to be drawn out, and we are become timorous, desponding whimpers. We are afraid of truth, afraid of fortune,<sup>20</sup> afraid of death, and afraid of each other. Our age yields no great and perfect persons. We want men and women who shall renovate life and our social state, but we see that most natures are insolvent, cannot satisfy their own wants, have an ambition out of all proportion to their practical force and do lean and beg day and night continually. Our housekeeping is mendicant, our arts, our occupations, our marriages, our religion we have not chosen, but society has chosen for us. We are parlor soldiers. We<sup>30</sup> shun the rugged battle of fate, where strength is born.

If our young men miscarry in their first enterprises they lose all heart. If the young merchant fails, men say he is *ruined*. If the finest genius studies at one of our colleges and is not installed in an office within one year afterwards in the cities or suburbs of Boston or New York, it seems to his friends and to himself that he is right in being disheartened and in complaining the rest of his life. A sturdy lad from New Hampshire or Vermont, who in turn tries all the professions, who *teams it, farms it, peddles,* keeps a school, preaches, edits a newspaper, goes to Congress, buys a township, and so forth, in successive years, and always like a cat falls on his feet, is worth a hundred of these city dolls. He walks abreast with his

days and feels no shame in not "studying a profession," for he does not postpone his life, but lives already. He has not one chance, but a hundred chances. Let a Stoic<sup>229</sup> open the resources of man and tell men they are not leaning willows, but can and must detach themselves; that with the exercise of self-trust, new powers shall appear; that a man is the word made flesh,<sup>230</sup> born to shed healing to the nations;<sup>231</sup> that he should be ashamed of our compassion, and that the moment he acts from himself, tossing the laws, the books, idolatries and customs out of the window, we pity him no more but thank and revere him;—and that teacher shall restore the life of man to splendor and make his name dear to all history.

It is easy to see that a greater self-reliance must work a revolution in all the offices and relations of men; in their religion; in their education; in their pursuits; their modes of living; their association; in their property; in their speculative views.

1. In what prayers do men allow themselves! That which they call a holy office is not so much as brave and manly. Prayer looks abroad and asks for some foreign addition to come through some foreign virtue, and loses itself in endless mazes of natural and supernatural, and mediatorial and miraculous. Prayer that craves a particular commodity, anything less than all good, is vicious. Prayer is the contemplation of the facts of life from the highest point of view. It is the soliloquy of a beholding and jubilant soul. It is the spirit of God pronouncing his works good.<sup>232</sup> But prayer as a means to effect a private end is meanness and theft. It supposes dualism and not unity in nature and consciousness. As soon as the man is at one with God, he will not beg. He will then see prayer in all action. The prayer of the farmer kneeling in his field to weed it, the prayer of the rower kneeling with the stroke of his oar, are true prayers heard throughout nature, though for cheap ends. Caratach, in Fletcher's "Bonduca,"<sup>233</sup> when admonished to inquire the mind of the god Audate, replies,—

"His hidden meaning lies in our endeavors;  
Our valors are our best gods."

<sup>229</sup> See Revelation 22:3.

<sup>232</sup> See Genesis 1:21, 25, 31.

<sup>233</sup> A play ascribed to Beaumont and Fletcher. The quotation is from act III, scene 1, lines 88-9. The deity mentioned is Audate or Andraste.

<sup>229</sup> A Stoic is a follower of the school of philosophy founded by Zeno about 380 B.C., who taught that wise men are free from passion or feeling and indifferent to pleasure and pain.

<sup>230</sup> See John 1:14.

Another sort of false prayers are our regrets. Discontent is the want of self-reliance: it is infirmity of will. Regret calamities if you can thereby help the sufferer; if not, attend your own work and already the evil begins to be repaired. Our sympathy is just as base. We come to them who weep foolishly and sit down and cry for company, instead of imparting to them truth and health in rough electric shocks, putting them once more in communication with their own reason. The secret of fortune is joy in our hands. 10 Welcome evermore to gods and men is the self-helping man. For him all doors are flung wide; him all tongues greet, all honors crown, all eyes follow with desire. Our love goes out to him and embraces him because he did not need it. We solicitously and apologetically caress and celebrate him because he held on his way and scorned our disapprobation. The gods love him because men hated him. "To the persevering mortal," said Zoroaster,<sup>234</sup> "the blessed Im-

mortals are swift."

As men's prayers are a disease of the will, so are their creeds a disease of the intellect. They say with those foolish Israelites, "Let not God speak to us, lest we die. Speak thou, speak any man with us, and we will obey."<sup>235</sup> Everywhere I am hindered of meeting God in my brother, because he has shut his own temple doors and recites fables merely of his brother's, or his brother's brother's God. Every new mind is a new classification. If it prove a mind of uncommon activity and power, a Locke,<sup>236</sup> a Lavoisier,<sup>237</sup> a Hutton,<sup>238</sup> 30 a Bentham,<sup>239</sup> a Fourier,<sup>240</sup> it imposes its classification on other men, and lo! a new system. In proportion to the depth of the thought, and so to the number of the objects it touches and brings within reach of the pupil, is his complacency. But chiefly is this apparent in creeds and churches, which are also classifications of some powerful mind acting on the elemental thought of duty and man's relation to the Highest. Such is Calvinism, Quakerism, Swedenborgism. The pupil takes the same delight in subordinat- 40 ing every thing to the new terminology as a girl who has just learned botany in seeing a new earth and new seasons thereby. It will happen for a time that

the pupil will find his intellectual power has grown by the study of his master's mind. But in all unbalanced minds the classification is idolized, passes for the end and not for a speedily exhaustible means, so that the walls of the system blend to their eye in the remote horizon with the walls of the universe; the luminaries of heaven seem to them hung on the arch their master built. They cannot imagine how you aliens have any right to see,—how you can see; "It must be somehow that you stole the light from us." They do not yet perceive that light, unsystematic, indomitable, will break into any cabin, even into theirs. Let them chirp awhile and call it their own. If they are honest and do well, presently their neat new pinfold will be too strait and low, will crack, will lean, will rot and vanish, and the immortal light, all young and joyful, million-orbed, million-colored, will beam over the universe as on the first morning.

2. It is for want of self-culture that the superstition of Travelling, whose idols are Italy, England, Egypt, retains its fascination for all educated Americans. They who made England, Italy, or Greece venerable in the imagination, did so by sticking fast where they were, like an axis of the earth. In manly hours we feel that duty is our place. The soul is no traveller; the wise man stays at home, and when his necessities, his duties, on any occasion call him from his house, or into foreign lands, he is at home still and shall make men sensible by the expression of his countenance that he goes, the missionary of wisdom and virtue, and visits cities and men like a sovereign and not like an interloper or a valet.

I have no churlish objection to the circumnavigation of the globe for the purposes of art, of study, and benevolence, so that the man is first domesticated, or does not go abroad with the hope of finding somewhat greater than he knows. He who travels to be amused, or to get somewhat which he does not carry, travels away from himself, and grows old even in youth among old things. In Thebes,<sup>241</sup> in Palmyra,<sup>242</sup> his will and mind have become old and dilapidated as they. He carries ruins to ruins.

Travelling is a fool's paradise. Our first journeys discover to us the indifference of places. At home I

<sup>234</sup> The reputed founder of the ancient Persian religion.

<sup>235</sup> See Exodus 20:19.

<sup>236</sup> John Locke (1632-1704).

<sup>237</sup> Antoine Laurent Lavoisier (1743-94), the founder of modern chemistry.

<sup>238</sup> James Hutton (1726-97), a British geologist.

<sup>239</sup> Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832), English philosopher and jurist.

<sup>240</sup> François Marie Charles Fourier (1772-1837), a French socialist, whose ideas were put into practice in a number of Fourieristic communities in the United States.

<sup>241</sup> The ancient, ruined city of Thebes, near Karnak and Luxor in Egypt.

<sup>242</sup> Palmyra, ancient ruined city in Syria.

dream that at Naples, at Rome,<sup>243</sup> I can be intoxicated with beauty and lose my sadness. I pack my trunk, embrace my friends, embark on the sea and at last wake up in Naples, and there beside me is the stern fact, the sad self, unrelenting, identical, that I fled from. I seek the Vatican and the palaces. I affect to be intoxicated with sights and suggestions, but I am not intoxicated. My giant goes with me wherever I go.

3. But the rage of travelling is a symptom of a deeper unsoundness affecting the whole intellectual action. The intellect is vagabond, and our system of education fosters restlessness. Our minds travel when our bodies are forced to stay at home. We imitate; and what is imitation but the travelling of the mind? Our houses are built with foreign taste; our shelves are garnished with foreign ornaments; our opinions, our tastes, our faculties lean, and follow the Past and the Distant. The soul created the arts wherever they have flourished. It was in his own mind that the artist sought his model. It was an application of his own thought to the thing to be done and the conditions to be observed. And why need we copy the Doric or the Gothic<sup>244</sup> model? Beauty, convenience, grandeur of thought and quaint expression are as near to us as to any, and if the American artist will study with hope and love the precise thing to be done by him, considering the climate, the soil, the length of the day, the wants of the people, the habit and form of the government, he will create a house in which all these will find themselves fitted, and taste and sentiment will be satisfied also.

Insist on yourself; never imitate. Your own gift you can present every moment with the cumulative force of a whole life's cultivation; but of the adopted talent of another you have only an extemporaneous half possession. That which each can do best, none but his Maker can teach him. No man yet knows what it is, nor can, till that person has exhibited it. Where is the master who could have taught Shakespeare? Where is the master who could have instructed Franklin, or Washington, or Bacon, or Newton? Every great man is a unique. The Scipionism of Scipio<sup>245</sup> is precisely that part he could not

borrow. Shakspeare will never be made by the study of Shakspeare. Do that which is assigned you, and you cannot hope too much or dare too much. There is at this moment for you an utterance brave and grand as that of the colossal chisel of Phidias,<sup>246</sup> or trowel<sup>247</sup> of the Egyptians, or the pen of Moses or Dante, but different from all these. Not possibly will the soul, all rich, all eloquent, with thousand-cloven tongue, deign to repeat itself; but if you can hear what these patriarchs say, surely you can reply to them in the same pitch of voice; for the ear and the tongue are two organs of one nature. Abide in the simple and noble regions of thy life, obey thy heart, and thou shalt reproduce the Foreworld again.

4. As our Religion, our Education, our Art look abroad, so does our spirit of society. All men plume themselves on the improvement of society, and no man improves.

Society never advances. It recedes as fast on one side as it gains on the other. It undergoes continual changes; it is barbarous, it is civilized, it is christianized, it is rich, it is scientific; but this change is not amelioration. For every thing that is given something is taken. Society acquires new arts and loses old instincts. What a contrast between the well-clad, reading, writing, thinking American, with a watch, a pencil and a bill of exchange in his pocket, and the naked New Zealander, whose property is a club, a spear, a mat and an undivided twentieth of a shed to sleep under! But compare the health of the two men and you shall see that the white man has lost his aboriginal strength. If the traveller tell us truly, strike the savage with a broad-axe and in a day or two the flesh shall unite and heal as if you struck the blow into soft pitch, and the same blow shall send the white to his grave.

The civilized man has built a coach, but has lost the use of his feet. He is supported on crutches, but lacks so much support of muscle. He has a fine Geneva watch,<sup>248</sup> but he fails of the skill to tell the hour by the sun. A Greenwich<sup>249</sup> nautical almanac he has, and so being sure of the information when he wants it, the man in the street does not know a star in the sky. The solstice he does not observe; the

<sup>243</sup> Emerson visited both Naples and Rome on his first trip to Europe in 1833.

<sup>244</sup> The meaning is, "Why should we imitate classic or medieval types or styles of architecture?"

<sup>245</sup> Scipio Africanus Major (237?-183 B.C.), the conqueror of Hannibal.

<sup>246</sup> Phidias (498-432 B.C.), an Athenian sculptor famous for his statues of Athene and of Zeus.

<sup>247</sup> Trowel, the symbol of the mason. The Egyptians were great builders in stone.

<sup>248</sup> Geneva, Switzerland, was and remains a center of fine watch-making.

<sup>249</sup> Place where the Greenwich Royal Observatory is located.

equinox he knows as little; and the whole bright calendar of the year is without a dial in his mind. His note-books impair his memory; his libraries overload his wit; the insurance-office increases the number of accidents; and it may be a question whether machinery does not encumber; whether we have not lost by refinement some energy, by a Christianity, entrenched in establishments and forms, some vigor of wild virtue. For every Stoic was a Stoic; but in Christendom where is the Christian?

There is no more deviation in the moral standard than in the standard of height or bulk. No greater men are now than ever were. A singular equality may be observed between the great men of the first and of the last ages; nor can all the science, art, religion, and philosophy of the nineteenth century avail to educate greater men than Plutarch's heroes,<sup>250</sup> three or four and twenty centuries ago. Not in time is the race progressive. Phocion,<sup>251</sup> Socrates,<sup>252</sup> Anaxagoras,<sup>253</sup> Diogenes,<sup>254</sup> are great men, but they leave no class. He who is really of their class will not be called by their name, but will be his own man, and in his turn the founder of a sect. The arts and inventions of each period are only its costume and do not invigorate men. The harm of the improved machinery may compensate its good. Hudson<sup>255</sup> and Behring<sup>256</sup> accomplished so much in their fishing-boats as to astonish Parry<sup>257</sup> and Franklin,<sup>258</sup> whose equipment exhausted the resources of science and art. Galileo,<sup>259</sup> with an opera-glass, discovered a more splendid series of celestial phenomena than any one since. Columbus found the New World in an undecked boat. It is curious to see the periodical disuse and perishing of means and machinery which were introduced with loud laudation a few years or centuries before. The great genius returns to essential man. We reckoned the improvements of the art of war among the triumphs of science, and yet Napoleon conquered Europe by the bivouac, which consisted of falling back on naked valor and disencum-

bering it of all aids. The Emperor held it impossible to make a perfect army, says Las Cases,<sup>260</sup> "without abolishing our arms, magazines, commissaries and carriages, until, in imitation of the Roman custom, the soldier should receive his supply of corn, grind it in his hand-mill and bake his bread himself."

Society is a wave. The wave moves onward, but the water of which it is composed does not. The same particle does not rise from the valley to the ridge. Its unity is only phenomenal. The persons who make up a nation to-day, next year die, and their experience dies with them.

And so the reliance on Property, including the reliance on governments which protect it, is the want of self-reliance. Men have looked away from themselves and at things so long that they have come to esteem the religious, learned and civil institutions as guards of property, and they deprecate assaults on these, because they feel them to be assaults on property. They measure their esteem of each other by what each has, and not by what each is. But a cultivated man becomes ashamed of his property, out of new respect for his nature. Especially he hates what he has if he see that it is accidental,—came to him by inheritance, or gift, or crime; then he feels that it is not having; it does not belong to him, has no root in him and merely lies there because no revolution or no robber takes it away. But that which a man is, does always by necessity acquire; and what the man acquires, is living property, which does not wait the beck of rulers, or mobs, or revolutions, or fire, or storm, or bankruptcies, but perpetually renews itself wherever the man breathes. "Thy lot or portion of life," said the Caliph Ali,<sup>261</sup> "is seeking after thee; therefore be at rest from seeking after it." Our dependence on these foreign goods leads us to our slavish respect for numbers. The political parties meet in numerous conventions; the greater the concourse and with each new uproar of announcement, The delegation from Essex! The Democrats from New Hampshire! The Whigs of Maine! the young patriot feels himself stronger than before by a new

<sup>250</sup> *Plutarch's Lives* was one of Emerson's favorite books.

<sup>251</sup> Phocion (402-307 B.C.), Athenian statesman and general.

<sup>252</sup> Socrates (469-399 B.C.).

<sup>253</sup> Anaxagoras (500?-428 B.C.), a Greek philosopher.

<sup>254</sup> Diogenes (412?-323 B.C.), Greek cynic who searched the world for one honest man and made a tub his home.

<sup>255</sup> Henry Hudson (?-1611), English navigator. He explored Hudson Bay in 1610-11.

<sup>256</sup> Vitus Behring (1680-1741), Danish navigator, who explored the area around the Bering Sea in 1740-41.

<sup>257</sup> Sir William Edward Parry (1790-1850), English arctic explorer and seeker after the Northwest Passage.

<sup>258</sup> Sir John Franklin (1786-1847), English arctic explorer.

<sup>259</sup> Galileo Galilei (1564-1642) perfected his first telescope in 1609.

<sup>260</sup> Emmanuel Augustin Dieudonné, Marquis de Las Cases (1766-1842), Boswell to Napoleon and author of *Mémoires de Ste. Hélène* (1823).

<sup>261</sup> Ali ben Abu Talib (c. 600-661), son-in-law of Mohammed and the fourth Arabian caliph, noted for his wisdom. A collection of his sayings was translated by W. Yule (Edinburgh, 1832).

thousand of eyes and arms. In like manner the reformers summon conventions and vote and resolve in multitude. Not so, O friends! will the God deign to enter and inhabit you, but by a method precisely the reverse. It is only as a man puts off all foreign support and stands alone that I see him to be strong and to prevail. He is weaker by every recruit to his banner. Is not a man better than a town? Ask nothing of men, and, in the endless mutation, thou only firm column<sup>262</sup> must presently appear the upholder of all that surrounds thee. He who knows that power is inborn, that he is weak because he has looked for good out of him and elsewhere, and, so perceiving, throws himself unhesitatingly on his thought, instantly rights himself, stands in the erect position, commands his limbs, works miracles; just as a man

who stands on his feet is stronger than a man who stands on his head.

So use all that is called Fortune. Most men gamble with her, and gain all, and lose all, as her wheel rolls.<sup>263</sup> But do thou leave as unlawful these winnings, and deal with Cause and Effect, the chancellors of God. In the Will work and acquire, and thou hast chained the wheel of Chance, and shall sit hereafter out of fear from her rotations. A political victory, a rise of rents, the recovery of your sick or the return of your absent friend, or some other favorable event raises your spirits, and you think good days are preparing for you. Do not believe it. Nothing can bring you peace but yourself. Nothing can bring you peace but the triumph of principles.

1841

### *The Over-Soul*<sup>264</sup>

"But souls that of his own good life partake,  
He loves as his own self; dear as his eye  
They are to Him: He'll never them forsake:  
When they shall die, then God himself shall die:  
They live, they live in blest eternity."

HENRY MORE

Space is ample, east and west,  
But two cannot go abreast,  
Cannot travel in it two:       •  
Yonder masterful cuckoo  
Crowds every egg out of the nest,  
Quick or dead, except its own;  
A spell is laid on sod and stone,  
Night and Day 've been tampered with,  
Every quality and pith  
Surcharged and sultry with a power  
That works its will on age and hour.

There is a difference between one and another hour of life in their authority and subsequent effect. Our faith comes in moments; our vice is habitual. Yet there is a depth in those brief moments which constrains us to ascribe more reality to them than to all other experiences. For this reason the argument which is always forthcoming to silence those who conceive extraordinary hopes of man, namely the appeal to experience, is for ever invalid and vain. We

<sup>262</sup> Only firm column is in apposition with *thou*. The passage would be clearer if it read, "Thou, the only firm column . . ."

<sup>263</sup> The goddess Fortune is represented holding the wheel of fortune.

give up the past to the objector, and yet we hope. He must explain this hope. We grant that human life is mean, but how did we find out that it was mean?  
20 What is the ground of this uneasiness of ours; of this old discontent? What is the universal sense of want and ignorance, but the fine innuendo by which the soul makes its enormous claim? Why do men feel that the natural history of man has never been written, but he is always leaving behind what you have said of him, and it becomes old, and books of metaphysics worthless? The philosophy of six thousand years has not searched the chambers and magazines of the soul. In its experiments there has always re-  
30 mained, in the last analysis, a residuum it could not resolve. Man is a stream whose source is hidden. Our being is descending into us from we know not whence. The most exact calculator has no prescience that somewhat incalculable may not balk the very next moment. I am constrained every moment to acknowledge a higher origin for events than the will I call mine.

As with events, so it is with thoughts. When I watch that flowing river, which, out of regions I see not, pours for a season its streams into me, I see that

<sup>264</sup> Emerson's doctrine of the Over-Soul is a vital part of his philosophy and cognate with his belief in the divinity of man. For an indication of the various elements that contributed toward Emerson's doctrine, the student is referred to the notes on the essay in the Centenary or Concord editions of Emerson's *Writings*, II, 426-448.



I am a pensioner; not a cause but a surprised spectator of this ethereal water; that I desire and look up and put myself in the attitude of reception, but from some alien energy the visions come.

The Supreme Critic on the errors of the past and the present, and the only prophet of that which must be, is that great nature in which we rest as the earth lies in the soft arms of the atmosphere; that Unity, that Over-Soul, within which every man's particular being is contained and made one with all other; that common heart of which all sincere conversation is the worship, to which all right action is submission; that over-powering reality which confutes our tricks and talents, and constrains every one to pass for what he is, and to speak from his character and not from his tongue, and which evermore tends to pass into our thought and hand and become wisdom and virtue and power and beauty. We live in succession, in division, in parts, in particles. Meantime within man is the soul of the whole; the wise silence; the universal beauty, to which every part and particle is equally related; the eternal ONE. And this deep power in which we exist and whose beatitude is all accessible to us, is not only self-sufficing and perfect in every hour, but the act of seeing and the thing seen, the seer and the spectacle, the subject and the object, are one. We see the world piece by piece, as the sun, the moon, the animal, the tree; but the whole, of which these are the shining parts, is the soul. Only by the vision of that Wisdom can the horoscope of the ages be read, and by falling back on our better thoughts, by yielding to the spirit of prophecy which is innate in every man, we can know what it saith. Every man's words who speaks from that life must sound vain to those who do not dwell in the same thought on their own part. I dare not speak for it. My words do not carry its august sense; they fall short and cold. Only itself can inspire whom it will, and behold! their speech shall be lyrical, and sweet, and universal as the rising of the wind. Yet I desire, even by profane words, if I may not use sacred, to indicate the heaven of this deity and to report what hints I have collected of the transcendent simplicity and energy of the Highest Law.

If we consider what happens in conversation, in reveries, in remorse, in times of passion, in surprises, in the instructions of dreams, wherein often we see ourselves in masquerade,—the droll disguises only magnifying and enhancing a real element and forcing

it on our distant notice,—we shall catch many hints that will broaden and lighten into knowledge of the secret of nature. All goes to show that the soul in man is not an organ, but animates and exercises all the organs; is not a function, like the power of memory, of calculation, of comparison, but uses these as hands and feet; is not a faculty, but a light; is not the intellect or the will, but the master of the intellect and the will; is the background of our being, in which they lie,—an immensity not possessed and that cannot be possessed. From within or from behind, a light shines through us upon things and makes us aware that we are nothing, but the light is all. A man is the façade of a temple wherein all wisdom and all good abide. What we commonly call man, the eating, drinking, planting, counting man, does not, as we know him, represent himself, but misrepresents himself. Him we do not respect, but the soul, whose organ he is, would he let it appear through his action, would make our knees bend. When it breathes through his intellect, it is genius; when it breathes through his will, it is virtue; when it flows through his affection, it is love. And the blindness of the intellect begins when it would be something of itself. The weakness of the will begins when the individual would be something of himself. All reform aims in some one particular to let the soul have its way through us; in other words, to engage us to obey.

Of this pure nature every man is at some time sensible. Language cannot paint it with his colors. It is too subtle. It is undefinable, unmeasurable; but we know that it pervades and contains us. We know that all spiritual being is in man. A wise old proverb says, "God comes to see us without bell;"<sup>265</sup> that is, as there is no screen or ceiling between our heads and the infinite heavens, so is there no bar or wall in the soul, where man, the effect, ceases, and God, the cause, begins. The walls are taken away. We lie open on one side to the depths of spiritual nature, to the attributes of God. Justice we see and know, Love, Freedom, Power. These natures no man ever got above, but they tower over us, and most in the moment when our interests tempt us to wound them.

The sovereignty of this nature whereof we speak is made known by its independency of those limitations which circumscribe us on every hand. The soul circumscribes all things. As I have said, it contradicts

<sup>265</sup> Emerson recorded this old Spanish proverb in his *Journals*, II, 480.

all experience. In like manner it abolishes time and space. The influence of the senses has in most men overpowered the mind to that degree that the walls of time and space have come to look real and insurmountable; and to speak with levity of these limits is, in the world, the sign of insanity. Yet time and space are but inverse measures of the force of the soul. The spirit sports with time,—

“Can crowd eternity into an hour,  
Or stretch an hour to eternity.” <sup>266</sup>

We are often made to feel that there is another youth and age than that which is measured from the year of our natural birth. Some thoughts always find us young, and keep us so. Such a thought is the love of the universal and eternal beauty. Every man parts from that contemplation with the feeling that it rather belongs to ages than to mortal life. The least activity of the intellectual powers redeems us in a degree from the conditions of time. In sickness, in languor, give us a strain of poetry or a profound sentence, and we are refreshed; or produce a volume of Plato or Shakspeare, or remind us of their names, and instantly we come into a feeling of longevity. See how the deep divine thought reduces centuries and millenniums, and makes itself present through all ages. Is the teaching of Christ less effective now than it was when first his mouth was opened? The emphasis of facts and persons in my thought has nothing to do with time. And so always the soul's scale is one, <sup>30</sup> the scale of the senses and the understanding is another. Before the revelations of the soul, Time, Space and Nature shrink away. In common speech we refer all things to time, as we habitually refer the immensely sundered stars to one concave sphere. And so we say that the Judgment is distant or near, that the Millennium <sup>267</sup> approaches, that a day of certain political, moral, social reforms is at hand, and the like, when we mean that in the nature of things one of the facts we contemplate is external and fugitive, <sup>40</sup> and the other is permanent and connate <sup>268</sup> with the soul. The things we now esteem fixed shall, one by one, detach themselves like ripe fruit from our experience, and fall. The wind shall blow them none knows whither. The landscape, the figures, Boston, London,

are facts as fugitive as any institution past, or any whiff of mist or smoke, and so is society, and so is the world. The soul looketh steadily forwards, creating a world before her, leaving worlds behind her. She has no dates, nor rites, nor persons, nor specialties nor men. The soul knows only the soul; the web of events is the flowing robe in which she is clothed.

After its own law and not by arithmetic is the rate of its progress to be computed. The soul's advances <sup>10</sup> are not made by gradation, such as can be represented by motion in a straight line, but rather by ascension of state, such as can be represented by metamorphosis,—from the egg to the worm, from the worm to the fly. The growths of genius are of a certain *total* character, that does not advance the elect individual first over John, then Adam, then Richard, and give to each the pain of discovered inferiority,—but by every throe of growth the man expands there where he works, passing, at each pulsation, classes, populations, of men. With each divine impulse the mind rends the thin rinds of the visible and finite, and comes out into eternity, and inspires and expires its air. It converses with truths that have always been spoken in the world, and becomes conscious of a closer sympathy with Zeno <sup>269</sup> and Arrian <sup>270</sup> than with persons in the house.

This is the law of moral and of mental gain. The simple rise as by specific levity not into a particular virtue, but into the region of all the virtues. They are in the spirit which contains them all. The soul requires purity, but purity is not it; requires justice, but justice is not that; requires beneficence, but is somewhat better; so that there is a kind of descent and accommodation felt when we leave speaking of moral nature to urge a virtue which it enjoins. To the well-born child all the virtues are natural, and not painfully acquired. Speak to his heart, and the man becomes suddenly virtuous.

Within the same sentiment is the germ of intellectual growth, which obeys the same law. Those who are capable of humility, of justice, of love, of aspiration, stand already on a platform that commands the sciences and arts, speech and poetry, action and grace. For whoso dwells in this moral beatitude already anticipates those special powers which men prize so highly. The lover has no talent, no skill, which passes

<sup>266</sup> From William Blake's "Auguries of Innocence."

<sup>267</sup> William Miller (1782-1849) and his followers, known as Millerites, believed the world would come to an end in 1843, thus inaugurating the beginning of Christ's rule on the earth.

<sup>268</sup> Inborn, born with, innate.

<sup>269</sup> Zeno (336?-264? B.C.), Greek philosopher and founder of the Stoic school.

<sup>270</sup> Arrian (d. A.D. 180), and pupil of Epictetus (60?-120?), Roman Stoic philosopher.

for quite nothing with his enamored maiden, however little she may possess of related faculty; and the heart which abandons itself to the Supreme Mind finds itself related to all its works, and will travel a royal road to particular knowledges and powers. In ascending to this primary and aboriginal<sup>271</sup> sentiment we have come from our remote station on the circumference instantaneously to the centre of the world, where, as in the closet of God, we see causes, and anticipate the universe, which is but a slow effect.

One mode of the divine teaching is the incarnation of the spirit in a form.—in forms, like my own. I live in society; with persons who answer to thoughts in my own mind, or express a certain obedience to the great instincts to which I live. I see its presence to them. I am certified of a common nature; and these other souls, these separated selves, draw me as nothing else can. They stir in me the new emotions we call passion: of love, hatred, fear, admiration, pity;<sup>20</sup> thence come conversation, competition, persuasion, cities and war. Persons are supplementary to the primary teaching of the soul. In youth we are mad for persons. Childhood and youth see all the world in them. But the larger experience of man discovers the identical nature appearing through them all. Persons themselves acquaint us with the impersonal. In all conversation between two persons tacit reference is made, as to a third party, to a common nature. That third party or common nature is not social; it is im-<sup>30</sup>personal; is God. And so in groups where debate is earnest, and especially on high questions, the company become aware that the thought rises to an equal level in all bosoms, that all have a spiritual property in what was said, as well as the sayer. They all become wiser than they were. It arches over them like a temple, this unity of thought in which every heart beats with nobler sense of power and duty, and thinks and acts with unusual solemnity. All are con-<sup>40</sup>scious of attaining to a higher self-possession. It shines for all. There is a certain wisdom of humanity which is common to the greatest men with the lowest, and which our ordinary education often labors to silence and obstruct. The mind is one, and the best minds, who love truth for its own sake, think much less of property in truth. They accept it thankfully everywhere, and do not label or stamp it with any man's name, for it is theirs long beforehand, and

<sup>271</sup> In the sense of "from the first."

from eternity. The learned and the studious of thought have no monopoly of wisdom. Their violence of direction in some degree disqualifies them to think truly. We owe many valuable observations to people who are not very acute or profound, and who say the thing without effort which we want and have long been hunting in vain. The action of the soul is oftener in that which is felt and left unsaid than in that which is said in any conversation. It broods over every society, and they unconsciously seek for it in each other. We know better than we do. We do not yet possess ourselves, and we know at the same time that we are much more. I feel the same truth how often in my trivial conversation with my neighbors, that somewhat higher in each of us overlooks this by-play, and Jove nods to Jove from behind each of us.

Men descend to meet. In their habitual and mean service to the world, for which they forsake their native nobleness, they resemble those Arabian sheiks who dwell in mean houses and affect an external poverty, to escape the rapacity of the Pacha,<sup>272</sup> and reserve all their display of wealth for their interior and guarded retirements.

As it is present in all persons, so it is in every period of life. It is adult already in the infant man. In my dealing with my child, my Latin and Greek, my accomplishments and my money stead me nothing; but as much soul as I have avails. If I am wilful, he sets his will against mine, one for one, and leaves me, if I please, the degradation of beating him by my superiority of strength. But if I renounce my will and act for the soul, setting that up as umpire between us two, out of his young eyes looks the same soul; he reveres and loves with me.

The soul is the perceiver and revealer of truth. We know truth when we see it, let sceptic and scoffer say what they choose. Foolish people ask you, when you have spoken what they do not wish to hear, "How do you know it is truth, and not an error of your own?" We know truth when we see it, from opinion, as we know when we are awake that we are awake. It was a grand sentence of Emanuel Swedenborg,<sup>273</sup> which would alone indicate the greatness of that man's perception.—"It is no proof of a man's understanding to be able to affirm whatever he pleases; but to be

<sup>272</sup> A Turkish governor. Arabia was a part of the Turkish empire when this essay was written.

<sup>273</sup> Swedenborg (1688–1772), Swedish scientist and religious leader.

able to discern that what is true is true, and that what is false is false,—this is the mark and character of intelligence.” In the book I read, the good thought returns to me, as every truth will, the image of the whole soul. To the bad thought which I find in it, the same soul becomes a discerning, separating sword, and lops it away. We are wiser than we know. If we will not interfere with our thought, but will act entirely, or see how the thing stands in God, we know the particular thing, and every thing, and every man. 10 For the Maker of all things and all persons stands behind us and casts his dread omniscience through us over things.

But beyond this recognition of its own in particular passages of the individual's experience, it also reveals truth. And here we should seek to reinforce ourselves by its very presence, and to speak with a worthier, loftier strain of that advent.<sup>274</sup> For the soul's communication of truth is the highest even in nature, since it then does not give somewhat from 20 itself, but it gives itself, or passes into and becomes that man whom it enlightens; or in proportion to that truth he receives, it takes him to itself.

We distinguish the announcements of the soul, its manifestations of its own nature, by the term *Revelation*. These are always attended by the emotion of the sublime. For this communication is an influx of the Divine mind into our mind. It is an ebb of the individual rivulet before the flowing surges of the sea of life. Every distinct apprehension of this central 30 commandment agitates men with awe and delight. A thrill passes through all men at the reception of new truth, or at the performance of a great action, which comes out of the heart of nature. In these communications the power to see is not separated from the will to do, but the insight proceeds from obedience, and the obedience proceeds from a joyful perception. Every moment when the individual feels himself invaded by it is memorable. By the necessity of our constitution a certain enthusiasm attends the 40 individual's consciousness of that divine presence.

<sup>274</sup> That is, coming.

<sup>275</sup> From Thomas Gray's *The Progress of Poetry*, l. 101.

<sup>276</sup> Trances during which Socrates heard the divine voice speaking to him; revelation.

<sup>277</sup> Plotinus (205?-270?), a neo-Platonist, who taught that the “union” of soul with God proceeded through intellectual virtue and moral purity.

<sup>278</sup> Porphyry (233-304?), a disciple of Plotinus.

<sup>279</sup> See Acts 9:1-18, and Galatians 1:15-16.

<sup>280</sup> Jakob Boehme (1575-1624), a German mystic and author of *Aurora, oder die Morgenröte im Aufgang*.

The character and duration of this enthusiasm vary with the state of the individual, from an ecstacy and trance and prophetic inspiration,—which is its rarer appearance,—to the faintest glow of virtuous emotion, in which form it warms, like our household fires, all the families and associations of men, and makes society possible. A certain tendency to insanity has always attended the opening of the religious sense in men, as if they had been “blasted with excess of light.”<sup>275</sup> The trances of Socrates,<sup>276</sup> the “union” of Plotinus,<sup>277</sup> the vision of Porphyry,<sup>278</sup> the conversion of Paul,<sup>279</sup> the aurora of Behmen,<sup>280</sup> the convulsions of George Fox<sup>281</sup> and his Quakers, the illumination of Swedenborg,<sup>282</sup> are of this kind. What was in the case of these remarkable persons a ravishment, has, in innumerable instances in common life, been exhibited in less striking manner. Everywhere the history of religion betrays a tendency to enthusiasm. The rapture of the Moravian<sup>283</sup> and Quakerist;<sup>284</sup> the opening of the eternal sense of the Word, in the language of the New Jerusalem Church;<sup>285</sup> the *revival* of the Calvinistic churches; the *experiences*<sup>286</sup> of the Methodists, are varying forms of that shudder of awe and delight with which the individual soul always mingles with the universal soul.

The nature of these revelations is the same; they are perceptions of the absolute law. They are solutions of the soul's own questions. They do not answer the questions which the understanding asks. The soul 30 answers never by words, but by the thing itself that is inquired after.

Revelation is the disclosure of the soul. The popular notion of a revelation is that it is a telling of fortunes. In past oracles of the soul the understanding seeks to find answers to sensual questions, and undertakes to tell from God how long men shall exist, what their hands shall do and who shall be their company, adding names and dates and places. But we must pick no locks. We must check this low 40 curiosity. An answer in words is delusive; it is really

<sup>281</sup> George Fox (1624-91), founder of the English Quakers, whose mystic illuminations were accompanied by shakings or tremblings.

<sup>282</sup> The religious “insights” of Swedenborg.

<sup>283</sup> A sect founded in Moravia or Bohemia, stressing the peace of the Christian soul.

<sup>284</sup> A seventeenth-century religious movement, stressing the idea that the soul should passively await the mystic revelation.

<sup>285</sup> The church of the followers of Swedenborg.

<sup>286</sup> The Methodists originally laid great emphasis upon the “experience” of religious conversion and upon the communication of this experience for the benefit of others; hence their giving “testimony.”

no answer to the questions you ask. Do not require a description of the countries towards which you sail. The description does not describe them to you, and to-morrow you arrive there and know them by inhabiting them. Men ask concerning the immortality of the soul, the employments of heaven, the state of the sinner, and so forth. They even dream that Jesus has left replies to precisely these interrogatories. Never a moment did that sublime spirit speak in their *patois*.<sup>287</sup> To truth, justice, love, the attributes of the soul, the idea of immutableness is essentially associated. Jesus, living in these moral sentiments, heedless of sensual fortunes, heeding only the manifestations of these, never made the separation of the idea of duration from the essence of these attributes, nor uttered a syllable concerning the duration of the soul. It was left to his disciples to sever duration from the moral elements, and to teach the immortality of the soul as a doctrine, and maintain it by evidences. The moment the doctrine of the immortality is separately taught, man is already fallen. In the flowing of love, in the adoration of humility, there is no question of continuance. No inspired man ever asks this question or condescends to these evidences. For the soul is true to itself, and the man in whom it is shed abroad cannot wander from the present, which is infinite, to a future which would be finite.

These questions which we lust to ask about the future are a confession of sin. God has no answer for them. No answer in words can reply to a question of things. It is not in an arbitrary "decree of God," but in the nature of man, that a veil shuts down on the facts of to-morrow; for the soul will not have us read any other cipher than that of cause and effect. By this veil which curtains events it instructs the children of men to live in to-day. The only mode of obtaining an answer to these questions of the senses is to forego all low curiosity, and, accepting the tide of being which floats us into the secret of nature, work and live, work and live, and all unawares the advancing soul has built and forged for itself a new condition, and the question and the answer are one.

By the same fire, vital, consecrating, celestial, which burns until it shall dissolve all things into the waves and surges of an ocean of light, we see and know each other, and what spirit each is of. Who can tell the grounds of his knowledge of the character of

the several individuals in his circle of friends? No man. Yet their acts and words do not disappoint him. In that man, though he knew no ill of him, he put no trust. In that other, though they had seldom met, authentic signs had yet passed, to signify that he might be trusted as one who had an interest in his own character. We know each other very well,—which of us has been just to himself and whether that which we teach or behold is only an aspiration or is our honest effort also.

We are all discerners of spirits. That diagnosis lies aloft in our life or unconscious power. The intercourse of society, its trade, its religion, its friendships, its quarrels, is one wide judicial investigation of character. In full court, or in small committee, or confronted face to face, accuser and accused, men offer themselves to be judged. Against their will they exhibit those decisive trifles by which character is read. But who judges? and what? Not our understanding. We do not read them by learning or craft. No; the wisdom of the wise man consists herein, that he does not judge them; he lets them judge themselves and merely reads and records their own verdict.

By virtue of this inevitable nature, private will is overpowered, and, maugre our efforts or our imperfections, your genius will speak from you, and mine from me. That which we are, we shall teach, not voluntarily but involuntarily. Thoughts come into our minds by avenues which we never left open, and thoughts go out of our minds through avenues which we never voluntarily opened. Character teaches over our head. The infallible index of true progress is found in the tone the man takes. Neither his age, nor his breeding, nor company, nor books, nor actions, nor talents, nor all together can hinder him from being deferential to a higher spirit than his own. If he have not found his home in God, his manners, his forms of speech, the turn of his sentences, the build, shall I say, of all his opinions will involuntarily confess it, let him brave it out how he will. If he have found his centre, the Deity will shine through him, through all the disguises of ignorance, of ungenial temperament, of unfavorable circumstance. The tone of seeking is one, and the tone of having is another.

The great distinction between teachers sacred or literary,—between poets like Herbert,<sup>288</sup> and poets

<sup>287</sup> Dialect.

<sup>288</sup> George Herbert (1593-1633), English writer of mystic religious poetry,

like Pope,<sup>289</sup>—between philosophers like Spinoza,<sup>290</sup> Kant<sup>291</sup> and Coleridge,<sup>292</sup> and philosophers like Locke,<sup>293</sup> Paley,<sup>294</sup> Mackintosh<sup>295</sup> and Stewart,<sup>296</sup>—between men of the world who are reckoned accomplished talkers, and here and there a fervent mystic, prophesying half insane under the infinitude of his thought,—is that one class speak *from within*, or from experience, as parties and possessors of the fact; and the other class *from without*, as spectators merely, or perhaps as acquainted with the fact on the evidence of third persons. It is of no use to preach to me from without. I can do that too easily myself. Jesus speaks always from within, and in a degree that transcends all others. In that is the miracle. I believe beforehand that it ought so to be. All men stand continually in the expectation of the appearance of such a teacher. But if a man do not speak from within the veil, where the word is one with that it tells of, let him lowly confess it.

The same Omniscience flows into the intellect and makes what we call genius. Much of the wisdom of the world is not wisdom, and the most illuminated class of men are no doubt superior to literary fame, and are not writers. Among the multitude of scholars and authors we feel no hallowing presence; we are sensible of a knack and skill rather than of inspiration; they have a light and know not whence it comes and call it their own; their talent is some exaggerated faculty, some overgrown member, so that their strength is a disease. In these instances the intellectual gifts do not make the impression of virtue, but almost of vice; and we feel that a man's talents stand in the way of his advancement in truth. But genius is religious. It is a larger imbibing of the common heart. It is not anomalous, but more like and not less like other men. There is in all great poets a wisdom of humanity which is superior to any talents they exercise. The author, the wit, the partisan, the fine gentleman, does not take place of the man. Humanity shines in Homer, in Chaucer, in Spenser, in Shakespeare, in Milton. They are content with truth.

<sup>289</sup> Alexander Pope (1688–1744), author of mundane verse satires.

<sup>290</sup> Baruch Spinoza (1632–77), a Dutch Jew, philosophical pantheist who taught that God is the substance of all things.

<sup>291</sup> Immanuel Kant (1724–1804), founder of German critical transcendentalism.

<sup>292</sup> Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772–1834), poet, critic, and philosopher, who tried to harmonize Christian theology and transcendental idealism in such works as *Aids to Reflection* (1821), which Emerson read carefully.

They use the positive degree. They seem frigid and phlegmatic to those who have been spiced with the frantic passion and violent coloring of inferior but popular writers. For they are poets by the free course which they allow to the informing soul, which through their eyes beholds again and blesses the things which it hath made. The soul is superior to its knowledge, wiser than any of its works. The great poet makes us feel our own wealth, and then we think less of his compositions. His best communication to our mind is to teach us to despise all he has done. Shakespeare carries us to such a lofty strain of intelligent activity as to suggest a wealth which beggars his own; and we then feel that the splendid works which he has created, and which in other hours we extol as a sort of self-existent poetry, take no stronger hold of real nature than the shadow of a passing traveller on the rock. The inspiration which uttered itself in Hamlet and Lear could utter things as good from day to day for ever. Why then should I make account of Hamlet and Lear, as if we had not the soul from which they fell as syllables from the tongue?

This energy does not descend into individual life on any other condition than entire possession. It comes to the lowly and simple; it comes to whomsoever will put off what is foreign and proud; it comes as insight; it comes as serenity and grandeur. When we see those whom it inhabits, we are apprised of new degrees of greatness. From that inspiration the man comes back with a changed tone. He does not talk with men with an eye to their opinion. He tries them. It requires of us to be plain and true. The vain traveller attempts to embellish his life by quoting my lord and the prince and the countess, who thus said or did to *him*. The ambitious vulgar show you their spoons and brooches and rings, and preserve their cards and compliments. The more cultivated, in their account of their own experience,

<sup>293</sup> John Locke (1632–1704), author of *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690), and chief exponent of the sensation philosophy which the New England Transcendentalists sought to combat.

<sup>294</sup> William Paley (1743–1805), English theologian, who sought, in his *Natural Theology*, to demonstrate the existence of God by the evidences of design in the natural world.

<sup>295</sup> Sir James Mackintosh (1765–1832), Scotch rationalistic metaphysician.

<sup>296</sup> Dugald Stewart (1753–1828), one of the "Common-sense" school of Scotch logicians who accepted the existence of both matter and mind as ordinarily perceived.

cull out the pleasing, poetic circumstance,—the visit to Rome, the man of genius they saw, the brilliant friend they know; still further on perhaps the gorgeous landscape, the mountain lights, the mountain thoughts they enjoyed yesterday,—and so seek to throw a romantic color over their life. But the soul that ascends to worship the great God is plain and true; has no rose-color, no fine friends, no chivalry, no adventures; does not want admiration; dwells in the hour that now is, in the earnest experience of the common day,—by reason of the present moment and the mere trifle having become porous to thought and bibulous of the sea of light.

Converse with a mind that is grandly simple, and literature looks like word-catching. The simplest utterances are worthiest to be written, yet are they so cheap and so things of course, that in the infinite riches of the soul it is like gathering a few pebbles off the ground, or bottling a little air in a phial, when the whole earth and the whole atmosphere are ours.<sup>20</sup> Nothing can pass there, or make you one of the circle, but the casting aside your trappings and dealing man to man in naked truth, plain confession and omniscient affirmation.

Souls such as these treat you as gods would, walk as gods in the earth, accepting without any admiration your wit, your bounty, your virtue even,—say rather your act of duty, for your virtue they own as their proper blood, royal as themselves, and over-royal, and the father of the gods. But what rebuke<sup>30</sup> their plain fraternal bearing casts on the mutual flattery with which authors solace each other and wound themselves! These flatter not. I do not wonder that these men go to see Cromwell<sup>297</sup> and Christina<sup>298</sup> and Charles the Second<sup>299</sup> and James the First<sup>300</sup> and the Grand Turk?<sup>301</sup> For they are, in their own elevation, the fellows of kings, and must feel the servile tone of conversation in the world. They must always be a godsend to princes, for they confront them, a king to a king, without ducking or concession, and give a high nature the refreshment and satisfaction of resistance, of plain humanity, of even companionship and of new ideas. They leave them wiser and superior men. Souls like these make us feel

that sincerity is more excellent than flattery. Deal so plainly with man and woman as to constrain the utmost sincerity and destroy all hope of trifling with you. It is the highest compliment you can pay. Their "highest praising," said Milton, "is not flattery, and their plainest advice is a kind of praising."<sup>302</sup>

Ineffable is the union of man and God in every act of the soul. The simplest person who in his integrity worships God, becomes God; yet for ever and ever the influx of this better and universal self is new and unsearchable. It inspires awe and astonishment. How dear, how soothing to man, arises the idea of God, peopling the lonely place, effacing the scars of our mistakes and disappointments! When we have broken our god of tradition and ceased from our god of rhetoric, then may God fire the heart with his presence. It is the doubling of the heart itself, nay, the infinite enlargement of the heart with a power of growth to a new infinity on every side. It inspires in man an infallible trust. He has not the conviction, but the sight, that the best is the true, and may in that thought easily dismiss all particular uncertainties and fears, and adjourn to the sure revelation of time the solution of his private riddles. He is sure that his welfare is dear to the heart of being. In the presence of law to his mind he is overflowed with a reliance so universal that it sweeps away all cherished hopes and the most stable projects of mortal condition in its flood. He believes that he cannot escape from his good. The things that are really for thee gravitate to thee. You are running to seek your friend. Let your feet run, but your mind need not. If you do not find him, will you not acquiesce that it is best you should not find him? for there is a power, which, as it is in you, is in him also, and could therefore very well bring you together, if it were for the best. You are preparing with eagerness to go and render a service to which your talent and your taste invite you, the love of men and the hope of fame. Has it not occurred to you that you have no right to go, unless you are equally willing to be prevented from going? O, believe, as thou livest, that every sound that is spoken over the round world, which thou oughtest to hear, will vibrate on thine ear! Every proverb, every book, every by-word that belongs to thee for aid or comfort,

<sup>297</sup> Oliver Cromwell (1599-1658), Lord Protector of the Commonwealth (1653-58).

<sup>298</sup> Christina of Sweden (1626-89), daughter of Gustavus Adolphus, and notable patroness for men of learning.

<sup>299</sup> Charles II (1630-85).

<sup>300</sup> James I (1566-1625).

<sup>301</sup> The Grand Turk, *i.e.*, the Sultan of Turkey.

<sup>302</sup> Quoted from the fourth paragraph of Milton's *Areopagitica* (1644).



shall surely come home through open or winding passages. Every friend whom not thy fantastic will but the great and tender heart in thee craveth, shall lock thee in his embrace. And this because the heart in thee is the heart of all; not a valve, not a wall, not an intersection is there anywhere in nature, but one blood rolls uninterruptedly an endless circulation through all men, as the water of the globe is all one sea, and, truly seen, its tide is one.

Let man then learn the revelation of all nature and all thought to his heart; this, namely; that the Highest dwells with him; that the sources of nature are in his own mind, if the sentiment of duty is there. But if he would know what the great God speaketh, he must "go into his closet and shut the door,"<sup>303</sup> as Jesus said. God will not make himself manifest to cowards. He must greatly listen to himself, withdrawing himself from all the accents of other men's devotion. Even their prayers are hurtful to him, until he have made his own. Our religion vulgarly stands on numbers of believers. Whenever the appeal is made,—no matter how indirectly,—to numbers, proclamation is then and there made that religion is not. He that finds God a sweet enveloping thought to him never counts his company. When I sit in that presence, who shall dare to come in? When I rest in perfect humility, when I burn with pure love, what can Calvin<sup>304</sup> or Swedenborg say?

It makes no difference whether the appeal is to numbers or to one. The faith that stands on authority is not faith. The reliance on authority measures the decline of religion, the withdrawal of the soul. The position men have given to Jesus, now for many centuries of history, is a position of authority. It characterizes themselves. It cannot alter the eternal facts. Great is the soul, and plain. It is no flatterer, it is no follower; it never appeals from itself. It believes in itself. Before the immense possibilities of man all mere experience, all past biography, however spotless and sainted, shrinks away. Before that heaven which

our presentiments foreshow us, we cannot easily praise any form of life we have seen or read of. We not only affirm that we have few great men, but, absolutely speaking, that we have none; that we have no history, no record of any character or mode of living that entirely contents us. The saints and demigods whom history worships we are constrained to accept with a grain of allowance. Though in our lonely hours we draw a new strength out of their memory, yet, pressed on our attention, as they are by the thoughtless and customary, they fatigue and invade. The soul gives itself, alone, original and pure, to the Lonely, Original and Pure, who, on that condition, gladly inhabits, leads and speaks through it. Then is it glad, young and nimble. It is not wise, but it sees through all things. It is not called religious, but it is innocent. It calls the light its own, and feels that the grass grows and the stone falls by a law inferior to, and dependent on, its nature. Behold, it saith, I am born into the great, the universal mind. I, the imperfect, adore my own Perfect. I am somehow receptive of the great soul, and thereby I do overlook the sun and the stars and feel them to be the fair accidents and effects which change and pass. More and more the surges of everlasting nature enter into me, and I become public and human in my regards and actions. So come I to live in thoughts and act with energies which are immortal. Thus revering the soul, and learning, as the ancient said, that "its beauty is immense," man will come to see that the world is the perennial miracle which the soul worketh, and be less astonished at particular wonders; he will learn that there is no profane history; that all history is sacred; that the universe is represented in an atom, in a moment of time. He will weave no longer a spotted life of shreds and patches, but he will live with a divine unity. He will cease from what is base and frivolous in his life and be content with all places and with any service he can render. He will calmly front the morrow in the negligency of that trust which carries God with it and so hath already the whole future in the bottom of the heart.

<sup>303</sup> See Matthew 6:6.

<sup>304</sup> John Calvin (1590-1664), Swiss theologian and founder of Presbyterian theology.



*The Chardon Street Convention*<sup>305</sup>

In the month of November, 1840, a Convention of Friends of Universal Reform assembled in the Chardon Street Chapel in Boston, in obedience to a call in the newspapers, signed by a few individuals, inviting all persons to a public discussion of the institutions of the Sabbath, the Church and the Ministry. The Convention organized itself by the choice of Edmund Quincy as Moderator, spent three days in the consideration of the Sabbath, and adjourned to a day in March of the following year, for the discussion of the second topic. In March, accordingly, a three-days' session was holden in the same place, on the subject of the Church, and a third meeting fixed for the following November, which was accordingly holden; and the Convention debated, for three days again, the remaining subject of the Priesthood. This Convention never printed any report of its deliberations, nor pretended to arrive at any result by the expression of its sense in formal resolutions;—the professed objects of those persons who felt the greatest interest in its meetings being simply the elucidation of truth through free discussion. The daily newspapers reported, at the time, brief sketches of the course of proceedings, and the remarks of the principal speakers. These meetings attracted a great deal of public attention, and were spoken of in different circles in every note of hope, of sympathy, of joy, of alarm, of abhorrence and of merriment. The composition of the assembly was rich and various. The singularity and latitude of the summons drew together, from all parts of New England and also from the Middle States, men of every shade of opinion from the straitest orthodoxy to the wildest heresy, and any persons whose church was a church of one member only. A great variety of dialect and of costume was noticed; a great deal of confusion, eccentricity and freak appeared, as well as of zeal and enthusiasm. If the assembly was disorderly, it was picturesque. Madmen, madwomen, men with beards, Dunkers, Muggletonians, Come-outers, Groaners, Agrarians, Seventh-day Baptists, Quakers, Abolitionists, Calvinists, Unitarians and Philosophers,—all came successively to the top, and seized their moment, if not their hour, wherein to chide, or pray, or preach, or protest. The faces were a study. The most daring innovators and the champions-until-death of the old causes sat side by side. The still-living merit of the oldest New England families, glowing yet after several generations, encountered the founders of families, fresh merit, emerging, and expanding the brows to a new breadth, and lighting a clownish face with sacred fire. The assembly was characterized by the predominance of a certain plain, sylvan strength and earnestness, whilst many of the most intellectual and cultivated persons attended its councils. Dr. Channing, Edward Taylor, Bronson Alcott, Mr. Garrison, Mr. May, Theodore Parker, H. C. Wright, Dr. Osgood, William Adams, Edward Palmer, Jones Very, Maria W. Chapman and many other persons of a mystical or sectarian or philanthropic renown, were present, and some of them participant. And there was no want of female speakers; Mrs. Little and Mrs. Lucy Sessions took a pleasing and memorable part in the debate, and that flea of Conventions, Mrs. Abigail Folsom, was but too ready with her interminable scroll. If there was not parliamentary order, there was life, and the assurance of that constitutional love for religion and religious liberty which, in all periods, characterizes the inhabitants of this part of America.

There was a great deal of wearisome speaking in each of those three-days' sessions, but relieved by signal passages of pure eloquence, by much vigor of thought, and especially by the exhibition of character, and by the victories of character. These men and women were in search of something better and more satisfying than a vote or a definition, and they found what they sought, or the pledge of it, in the attitude taken by individuals of their number of resistance to the insane routine of parliamentary usage; in the lofty reliance on principles, and the prophetic dignity and transfiguration which accompanies, even amidst opposition and ridicule, a man whose mind is made up to obey the great inward Commander, and who does not anticipate his own action, but awaits confidently the new emergency for the new counsel. By no means the least value of this Convention, in our eye, was the scope it gave to the genius of Mr. Alcott, and not its least instructive lesson was the gradual but sure ascendancy of his spirit, in spite of the in-

<sup>305</sup> The detachment of Emerson from popular reform movements is noticeable throughout the essay.

credulity and derision with which he is at first received, and in spite, we might add, of his own failures. Moreover, although no decision was had, and no action taken on all the great points mooted in the discussion, yet the Convention brought together

many remarkable persons, face to face, and gave occasion to memorable interviews and conversations, in the hall, in the lobbies or around the doors.

1842

### *The Poet* <sup>306</sup>

A moody child and wildly wise  
Pursued the game with joyful eyes,  
Which chose, like meteors, their way,  
And rived the dark with private ray:  
They overleapt the horizon's edge,  
Searched with Apollo's privilege;  
Through man, and woman, and sea, and star  
Saw the dance of nature forward far;  
Through worlds, and races, and terms, and times  
Saw musical order, and pairing rhymes.

Olympian bards who sung  
Divine ideas below,  
Which always find us young,  
And always keep us so.

Those who are esteemed umpires of taste are often persons who have acquired some knowledge of admired pictures or sculptures, and have an inclination for whatever is elegant; but if you inquire whether they are beautiful souls, and whether their own acts are like fair pictures, you learn that they are selfish and sensual. Their cultivation is local, as if you should rub a log of dry wood in one spot to produce fire, all the rest remaining cold. Their knowledge of the fine arts is some study of rules and particulars, or <sup>306</sup> some limited judgment of color or form, which is exercised for amusement or for show. It is a proof of the shallowness of the doctrine of beauty as it lies in the minds of our amateurs, that men seem to have lost the perception of the instant <sup>307</sup> dependence of form upon soul. There is no doctrine of forms in our philosophy. We were put into our bodies, as fire is put into a pan to be carried about; <sup>308</sup> but there is no accurate adjustment between the spirit and the organ, much less is the latter the germination of the former. <sup>40</sup> So in regard to other forms, the intellectual men do not believe in any essential dependence of the mate-

rial world on thought and volition. Theologians think it a pretty air-castle to talk of the spiritual meaning of a ship or a cloud, of a city or a contract, but they prefer to come again to the solid ground of historical <sup>10</sup> evidence; and even the poets are contented with a civil and conformed manner of living, and to write poems from the fancy, at a safe distance from their own experience. But the highest minds of the world have never ceased to explore the double meaning, or shall I say the quadruple or the centuple or much more manifold meaning, of every sensuous fact; Orpheus, <sup>309</sup> Empedocles, <sup>310</sup> Heraclitus, <sup>311</sup> Plato, Plutarch, <sup>312</sup> Dante, Swedenborg, and the masters of sculpture, picture and poetry. For we are not pans and <sup>20</sup> barrows, nor even porters of the fire and torch-bearers, but children of the fire made of it, and only the same divinity transmuted and at two or three removes, when we know least about it. And this hidden truth, that the fountains whence all this river of Time and its creatures floweth are intrinsically ideal and beautiful, draws us to the consideration of the nature and functions of the Poet, or the man of Beauty; to the means and materials he uses, and to the general aspect of the art in the present time.

The breadth of the problem is great, for the poet is representative. He stands among partial men for the complete man, and apprises us not of his wealth, but of the common wealth. The young man reveres men of genius, because, to speak truly, they are more himself than he is. They receive of the soul as he also receives, but they more. Nature enhances her beauty, to the eye of loving men, from their belief that the poet is beholding her shows at the same time. He is isolated among his contemporaries by truth and by his art, but with this consolation in his pursuits, that they will draw all men sooner or later. For all men

<sup>306</sup> The first of the *Essays, Second Series* (1844).

<sup>307</sup> Immediate.

<sup>308</sup> As was customary before matches came into common use.

<sup>309</sup> Orpheus, the inspired singer of Greek mythology who moved rocks and trees with his music.

<sup>310</sup> Empedocles (500-430? B.C.), Greek philosopher.

<sup>311</sup> Heraclitus (flourished ca. 500 B.C.), Greek philosopher.

<sup>312</sup> Plutarch (A.D. 46-120), "father" of biography.

live by truth and stand in need of expression. In love, in art, in avarice, in politics, in labor, in games, we study to utter our painful secret. The man is only half himself, the other half is his expression.

Notwithstanding this necessity to be published, adequate expression is rare. I know not how it is that we need an interpreter, but the great majority of men seem to be minors, who have not yet come into possession of their own, or mutes, who cannot report the conversation they have had with nature. There is no man who does not anticipate a supersensual utility in the sun and stars, earth and water. These stand and wait to render him a peculiar service. But there is some obstruction or some excess of phlegm in our constitution, which does not suffer them to yield the due effect. Too feeble fall the impressions of nature on us to make us artists. Every touch should thrill. Every man should be so much an artist that he could report in conversation what had befallen him. Yet, in our experience, the rays or <sup>20</sup> appulses<sup>313</sup> have sufficient force to arrive at the senses, but not enough to reach the quick and compel the reproduction of themselves in speech. The poet is the person in whom these powers are in balance, the man without impediment, who sees and handles that which others dream of, traverses the whole scale of experience, and is representative of man, in virtue of being the largest power to receive and to impart.

For the Universe has three children, born at one <sup>30</sup> time, which reappear under different names in every system of thought, whether they be called cause, operation and effect; or, more poetically, Jove, Pluto, Neptune; or, theologically, the Father, the Spirit and the Son;<sup>314</sup> but which we call here the Knower, the Doer and the Sayer. These stand respectively for the love of truth, for the love of good, and for the love of beauty. These three are equal. Each is that which he is, essentially, so that he cannot be surmounted or analyzed, and each of these three has the power <sup>40</sup> of the others latent in him and his own, patent.

The poet is the sayer, the namer, and represents beauty. He is a sovereign, and stands on the centre. For the world is not painted or adorned, but is from the beginning beautiful; and God has not made some beautiful things, but Beauty is the creator of the

universe. Therefore the poet is not any permissive<sup>315</sup> potentate, but is emperor in his own right. Criticism is infested with a cant of materialism, which assumes that manual skill and activity is the first merit of all men, and disparages such as say and do not, overlooking the fact that some men, namely poets, are natural sayers, sent into the world to the end of expression, and confounds them with those whose province is action but who quit it to imitate the sayers. But Homer's words are as costly and admirable to Homer as Agamemnon's victories are to Agamemnon. The poet does not wait for the hero or the sage, but, as they act and think primarily, so he writes primarily what will and must be spoken, reckoning the others, though primaries also, yet, in respect to him, secondaries and servants; as sitters or models in the studio of a painter, or as assistants who bring building-materials to an architect.

For poetry was all written before time was, and whenever we are so finely organized that we can penetrate into that region where the air is music, we hear those primal warblings and attempt to write them down, but we lose ever and anon a word or a verse and substitute something of our own, and thus miswrite the poem. The men of more delicate ear write down these cadences more faithfully, and these transcripts, though imperfect, become the songs of the nations. For nature is as truly beautiful as it is good, or as it is reasonable, and must as much appear as it must be done, or be known. Words and deeds are quite indifferent modes of the divine energy. Words are also actions, and actions are a kind of words.

The sign and credentials of the poet are that he announces that which no man foretold. He is the true and only doctor;<sup>316</sup> he knows and tells; he is the only teller of news, for he was present and privy to the appearance which he describes. He is a beholder of ideas and an utterer of the necessary and causal. For we do not speak now of men of poetical talents, or of industry and skill in metre, but of the true poet. I took part in a conversation the other day concerning a recent writer of lyrics, a man of subtle mind, whose head appeared to be a music-box of delicate tunes and rhythms, and whose skill and command of language we could not sufficiently praise. But when the question arose whether he was not only a lyric

<sup>313</sup> Impulses from the outside.

<sup>314</sup> This identification of the classic deities with the Christian Trinity is unusual, to say the least.

<sup>315</sup> Optional.

<sup>316</sup> In the sense of a learned man, specialist, or expert.

but a poet, we were obliged to confess that he is plainly a contemporary, not an eternal man. He does not stand out of our low limitations, like a Chimborazo under the line,<sup>317</sup> running up from a torrid base through all the climates of the globe, with belts of the herbage of every latitude on its high and mottled sides; but this genius is the landscape-garden of a modern house, adorned with fountains and statues, with well-bred men and women standing and sitting in the walks and terraces. We hear, 10 through all the varied music, the ground-tone of conventional life. Our poets are men of talents who sing, and not the children of music. The argument is secondary, the finish of the verses is primary.

For it is not metres, but a metre-making argument that makes a poem,—a thought so passionate and alive that like the spirit of a plant or an animal it has an architecture of its own, and adorns nature with a new thing. The thought and the form are equal 20 in the order of time, but in the order of genesis the thought is prior to the form. The poet has a new thought; he has a whole new experience to unfold; he will tell us how it was with him, and all men will be the richer in his fortune. For the experience of each new age requires a new confession, and the world seems always waiting for its poet. I remember when I was young how much I was moved one morning by tidings that genius had appeared in a youth who sat near me at table. He had left his work and gone rambling none knew whither, and had written 30 hundreds of lines, but could not tell whether that which was in him was therein told; he could tell nothing but that all was changed,—man, beast, heaven, earth and sea. How gladly we listened! how credulous! Society seemed to be compromised. We sat in the aurora<sup>318</sup> of a sunrise which was to put out all the stars. Boston seemed to be at twice the distance it had the night before, or was much farther than that. Rome,—what was Rome? Plutarch and 40 Shakspeare were in the yellow leaf,<sup>319</sup> and Homer no more should be heard of. It is much to know that poetry has been written this very day, under this very roof, by your side. What! that wonderful spirit has not expired! These stony moments are still sparkling

and animated! I had fancied that the oracles were all silent, and nature had spent her fires; and behold! all night, from every pore, these fine auroras have been streaming. Every one has some interest in the advent of the poet, and no one knows how much it may concern him. We know that the secret of the world is profound, but who or what shall be our interpreter, we know not. A mountain ramble, a new style of face, a new person, may put the key into our hands. Of course the value of genius to us is in the veracity of its report. Talent may frolic and juggle; genius realizes and adds. Mankind in good earnest have availed so far in understanding themselves and their work, that the foremost watchman on the peak announces his news. It is the truest word ever spoken, and the phrase will be the fittest, most musical, and the unerring voice of the world for that time.

All that we call sacred history attests that the birth of a poet is the principal event in chronology. Man, never so often deceived, still watches for the arrival of a brother who can hold him steady to a truth until he has made it his own. With what joy I begin to read a poem which I confide in as an inspiration! And now my chains are to be broken; I shall mount above these clouds and opaque airs in which I live,—opaque, though they seem transparent,—and from the heaven of truth I shall see and comprehend my relations. That will reconcile 30 me to life and renovate nature, to see trifles animated by a tendency,<sup>320</sup> and to know what I am doing. Life will no more be a noise; now I shall see men and women, and know the signs by which they may be discerned from fools and satans.<sup>321</sup> This day shall be better than my birthday; then I became an animal; now I am invited into the science<sup>322</sup> of the real. Such is the hope, but the fruition is postponed. Oftener it falls that this winged man, who will carry me into the heaven, whirls me into mists, then leaps and frisks about with me as it were from cloud to cloud, still affirming that he is bound heavenward; and I, being myself a novice, am slow in perceiving that he does not know the way into the heavens, and is merely bent that I should admire his skill to rise like a fowl or a flying fish, a little way from the ground or the water; but the all-piercing, all-feeding

<sup>317</sup> A high peak in the Andes near the Equator (line).

<sup>318</sup> Here used to signify dawn. A few lines further on the word is used to indicate the aurora borealis or northern lights.

<sup>319</sup> See *Macbeth*, V, iii, 23: "My way of life is fall'n into the sere, the yellow leaf."

<sup>320</sup> To see the celestial in the common, or grasp the eternal purposes underlying the phenomenal or temporal.

<sup>321</sup> That is, fallen beings.

<sup>322</sup> In the sense of knowledge.

and ocular<sup>323</sup> air of heaven that man shall never inhabit. I tumble down again soon into my old nooks, and lead the life of exaggerations as before, and have lost my faith in the possibility of any guide who can lead me thither where I would be.

But, leaving these victims of vanity, let us, with new hope, observe how nature, by worthier impulses, has insured the poet's fidelity to his office of announcement and affirming, namely by the beauty of things, which becomes a new and higher beauty when expressed. Nature offers all her creatures to him as a picture-language. Being used as a type, a second wonderful value appears in the object, far better than its old value; as the carpenter's stretched cord,<sup>324</sup> if you hold your ear close enough, is musical in the breeze. "Things more excellent than every image," says Jamblichus,<sup>325</sup> "are expressed through images." Things admit of being used as symbols because nature is a symbol, in the whole, and in every part. Every line we can draw in the sand has expression; and there is no body without its spirit or genius. All form is an effect of character; all condition, of the quality of the life; all harmony, of health; and for this reason a perception of beauty should be sympathetic, or proper only to the good. The beautiful rests on the foundations of the necessary. The soul makes the body, as the wise Spenser teaches:—

"So every spirit, as it is more pure,  
And hath in it the more of heavenly light,  
So it the fairer body doth procure  
To habit in, and it more fairly dight,  
With cheerful grace and amiable sight.  
For, of the soul, the body form doth take,  
For soul is form, and doth the body make." <sup>326</sup>

Here we find ourselves suddenly not in a critical speculation but in a holy place, and should go very warily and reverently. We stand before the secret of the world, there where Being passes into Appearance and Unity into Variety.

The Universe is the externization of the soul. <sup>40</sup> Wherever the life is, that bursts into appearance around it. Our science is sensual,<sup>327</sup> and therefore

superficial. The earth and the heavenly bodies, physics and chemistry, we sensually treat, as if they were self-existent; but these are the retinue of that Being we have. "The mighty heaven," said Proclus,<sup>328</sup> exhibits, in its transfigurations, clear images of the splendor of intellectual perceptions; being moved in conjunction with the unapparent periods of intellectual natures." Therefore science always goes abreast with the just elevation of the man, keeping step with religion and metaphysics; or the state of science is an index of our self-knowledge. Since every thing in nature answers to a moral power, if any phenomenon remains brute and dark it is because the corresponding faculty in the observer is not yet active.

No wonder then, if these waters be so deep, that we hover over them with a religious regard. The beauty of the fable<sup>329</sup> proves the importance of the sense; to the poet, and to all others; or, if you please, every man is so far a poet as to be susceptible of these enchantments of nature; for all men have the thoughts whereof the universe is the celebration. I find that the fascination resides in the symbol. Who loves nature? Who does not? Is it only poets, and men of leisure and cultivation, who live with her? No; but also hunters, farmers, grooms and butchers, though they express their affection in their choice of life and not in their choice of words. The writer wonders what the coachman or the hunter values in riding, in horses and dogs. It is not superficial qualities. When you talk with him he holds these at as slight a rate as you. His worship is sympathetic; <sup>330</sup> he has no definitions, but he is commanded in nature by the living power which he feels to be there present. No imitation or playing of these things would content him; he loves the earnest<sup>331</sup> of the north wind, of rain, of stone and wood and iron. A beauty not explicable is dearer than a beauty which we can see to the end of. It is nature the symbol, nature certifying the supernatural, body overflowed by life which he worships with coarse but sincere rites.

The inwardness and mystery of this attachment drive men of every class to the use of emblems. The schools of poets and philosophers are not more intoxicated with their symbols than the populace with theirs. In our political parties, compute the power of badges and emblems. See the great ball which they

<sup>323</sup> Visible.

<sup>324</sup> A carpenter's cord is chalked, stretched taut between two points, and then suddenly let loose so that it marks a straight line between the two points.

<sup>325</sup> Jamblichus (d. 330?), a Syrian neo-Platonist.

<sup>326</sup> From Spenser's "An Hymne in Honour of Beautie," ll. 127-133.

<sup>327</sup> Superficial or sensory, in the sense that we seldom look beyond the apparent in the realms of Time and space.

<sup>328</sup> Proclus (410-85), a Greek neo-Platonist.

<sup>329</sup> That is, poetical subject or theme.

<sup>330</sup> Because of the sympathy between the poet and nature.

<sup>331</sup> Token or pledge.

roll from Baltimore to Bunker Hill! In the political processions,<sup>332</sup> Lowell goes in a loom,<sup>333</sup> and Lynn in a shoe,<sup>334</sup> and Salem in a ship.<sup>335</sup> Witness the cider-barrel,<sup>336</sup> the log-cabin, the hickory-stick,<sup>337</sup> the palmetto,<sup>338</sup> and all the cognizances of party. See the power of national emblems.<sup>339</sup> Some stars, lilies, leopards, a crescent, a lion, an eagle, or other figure which came into credit God knows how, on an old rag of bunting, blowing in the wind on a fort at the ends of the earth, shall make the blood tingle under the rudest or the most conventional exterior. The people fancy they hate poetry, and they are all poets and mystics!

Beyond this universality of the symbolic language, we are apprised of the divineness of this superior use of things, whereby the world is a temple whose walls are covered with emblems, pictures and commandments of the Deity,—in this, that there is no fact in nature which does not carry the whole sense of nature; and the distinctions which we make in events and in affairs, of low and high, honest and base, disappear when nature is used as a symbol. Thought makes everything fit for use. The vocabulary of an omniscient man would embrace words and images excluded from polite conversation. What would be base, or even obscene, to the obscene, becomes illustrious, spoken in a new connection of thought. The picty of the Hebrew prophets purges their grossness. The circumcision<sup>340</sup> is an example of the power of poetry to raise the low and offensive. Small and mean things serve as well as great symbols. The meaner the type by which a law is expressed, the more pungent it is, and the more lasting in the memories of men; just as we choose the smallest box or case in which any needful utensil can be carried. Bare lists of words are found suggestive to an imaginative and excited mind; as it is related of Lord Chatham<sup>341</sup> that he

<sup>332</sup> Parades held during the campaign of Harrison and Tyler ("Tippecanoe and Tyler, too").

<sup>333</sup> Lowell, Mass., noted for its textile industry.

<sup>334</sup> Lynn, Mass., a shoe-manufacturing center.

<sup>335</sup> The Yankee clipper, identified with the past of Salem, Mass.

<sup>336</sup> The cider barrel and log cabin are associated with the Harrison-Tyler campaign.

<sup>337</sup> The hickory stick, or walking stick, of Andrew Jackson, "Old Hickory."

<sup>338</sup> The palmetto, identified with South Carolina, or with Calhoun.

<sup>339</sup> The national emblems listed are the stars of the United States, the lilies of Bourbon France, the royal leopards of Scotland, the Turkish crescent, and the American eagle.

<sup>340</sup> See Luke 2:21.

<sup>341</sup> William Pitt (1708-78).

was accustomed to read in Bailey's Dictionary<sup>342</sup> when he was preparing to speak in Parliament. The poorest experience is rich enough for all the purposes of expressing thought. Why covet a knowledge of new facts? Day and night, house and garden, a few books, a few actions, serve us as well as would all trades and all spectacles. We are far from having exhausted the significance of the few symbols we use. We can come to use them yet with a terrible simplicity. It does not need that a poem should be long. Every word was once a poem.<sup>343</sup> Every new relation is a new word. Also we use defects and deformities to a sacred purpose, so expressing our sense that the evils of the world are such only to the evil eye. In the old mythology, mythologists observe, defects are ascribed to divine natures, as lameness to Vulcan, blindness to Cupid, and the like,—to signify exuberances.

For as it is dislocation and detachment from the life of God that makes things ugly, the poet, who re-attaches things to nature and the Whole,—re-attaching even artificial things and violation of nature, to nature, by a deeper insight,—disposes very easily of the most disagreeable facts. Readers of poetry see the factory-village and the railway, and fancy that the poetry of the landscape is broken up by these; for these works of art are not yet consecrated in their reading: but the poet sees them fall within the great Order not less than the beehive or the spider's geometrical web. Nature adopts them very fast into her vital circles, and the gliding train of cars she loves like her own. Besides, in a centred mind, it signifies nothing how many mechanical inventions you exhibit. Though you add millions, and never so surprising, the fact of mechanics has not gained a grain's weight. The spiritual fact remains unalterable, by many or by few particulars; as no mountain is of any appreciable height to break the curve of the sphere. A shrewd country-boy goes to the city for the first time, and the complacent citizen is not satisfied with his little wonder. It is not that he does not see all the fine houses and know that he never saw such before, but he disposes of them as easily as the poet finds place for the railway. The chief value of the new fact is to enhance the great and constant fact of Life, which can dwarf any and

<sup>342</sup> *The Universal Etymological English Dictionary* (1721), by Nathan Bailey.

<sup>343</sup> A characteristic theory of romanticism, associated with primitivism.

every circumstance, and to which the belt of wampum<sup>344</sup> and the commerce of America are alike.

The world being thus put under the mind for verb and noun, the poet is he who can articulate it.<sup>345</sup> For though life is great, and fascinates and absorbs; and though all men are intelligent of<sup>346</sup> the symbols through which it is named; yet they cannot originally use them. We are symbols and inhabit symbols; workmen, work, and tools, words and things, birth and death, all are emblems; but we sympathize with the symbols, and being infatuated with the economical<sup>347</sup> uses of things, we do not know that they are thoughts. The poet, by an ulterior intellectual perception, gives them a power which makes their old use forgotten, and puts eyes and a tongue into every dumb and inanimate object. He perceives the independence of the thought on the symbol, the stability of the thought, the accidentality<sup>348</sup> and fugacity<sup>349</sup> of the symbol. As the eyes of Lynceus<sup>350</sup> were said to see through the earth, so the poet turns the world to glass, and shows us all things in their right series and procession. For through that better perception he stands one step nearer to things, and sees the flowing or metamorphosis; perceives that thought is multi-form; that within the form of every creature is a force impelling it to ascend into a higher form; and following with his eyes the life, uses the forms which express that life, and so his speech flows with the flowing of nature. All the facts of the animal economy, sex, nutriment, gestation, birth, growth, are symbols of the passage of the world into the soul of man, to suffer there a change and reappear a new and higher fact. He uses forms according to the life, and not according to the form. This is true science. The poet alone knows astronomy, chemistry, vegetation and animation, for he does not stop at these facts, but employs them as signs. He knows why the plain or meadow of space was strown with these flowers we call suns and moons and stars; why the great deep is adorned with animals, with men, and gods; for in every word he speaks he rides on them as the horses of thought.

<sup>344</sup> Used as currency by the North American Indians.

<sup>345</sup> Express, enunciate, put into words.

<sup>346</sup> "Intelligent of" in the sense of "aware of" or "conversant with."

<sup>347</sup> Orderly.

<sup>348</sup> Accidental, factitious.

<sup>349</sup> Flying, fugitive.

<sup>350</sup> Lynceus, one of the Greek mythological heroes, gifted with marvelous eyesight, who went on the quest of the Golden Fleece.

By virtue of this science the poet is the Namer or Language-maker, naming things sometimes after their appearance, sometimes after their essence, and giving to everyone its own name and not another's, thereby rejoicing the intellect, which delights in detachment or boundary. The poets made all the words, and therefore language is the archives of history, and, if we must say it, a sort of tomb of the muses. For though the origin of most of our words is forgotten, each word was at first a stroke of genius, and obtained currency because for the moment it symbolized the world to the first speaker and to the hearer. The etymologist finds the deadest word to have been once a brilliant picture. Language is fossil poetry. As the limestone of the continent consists of infinite masses of the shells of animalcules, so language is made up of images or tropes, which now, in their secondary use, have long ceased to remind us of their poetic origin. But the poet names the thing because he sees it, or comes one step nearer to it than any other. This expression or naming is not art, but a second nature, grown out of the first, as a leaf out of a tree. What we call nature is a certain self-regulated motion or change; and nature does all things by her own hands, and does not leave another to baptize her but baptizes herself; and this through the metamorphosis again. I remember that a certain poet<sup>351</sup> described it to me thus:—

Genius is the activity which repairs the decays of things, whether wholly or partly of a material and finite kind. Nature, through all her kingdoms, insures herself. Nobody cares for planting the poor fungus; so she shakes down from the gills of one agaric<sup>352</sup> countless spores, any one of which, being preserved, transmits new billions of spores to-morrow or next day. The new agaric of this hour has a chance which the old one had not. This atom of seed is thrown into a new place, not subject to the accidents which destroyed its parent two rods off. She makes a man; and having brought him to ripe age, she will no longer run the risk of losing this wonder at a blow, but she detaches from him a new self, that the kind may be safe from accidents to which the individual is exposed. So when the soul of the poet has come to

<sup>351</sup> Emerson is fond of adopting an *alter ego*, who may be either himself or some friend, like A. Bronson Alcott. Here the allusion appears to be to Emerson himself in his Orphic capacity.

<sup>352</sup> A kind of fungus.

ripeness of thought, she detaches and sends away from it its poems or songs,—a fearless, sleepless, deathless progeny, which is not exposed to the accidents of the weary kingdom of time; a fearless, vivacious offspring, clad with wings (such was the virtue of the soul out of which they came) which carry them fast and far, and infix them irrecoverably into the hearts of men. These wings are the beauty of the poet's soul. The songs, thus flying immortal from their mortal parent, are pursued by clamorous flights of censures, which swarm in far greater numbers and threaten to devour them; but these last are not winged. At the end of a very short leap they fall plump down and rot, having received from the souls out of which they came no beautiful wings. But the melodies of the poet ascend and leap and pierce into the depths of infinite time.

So far the bard taught me, using his freer speech. But nature has a higher end, in the production of new individuals, than security, namely *ascension*, or the passage of the soul into higher forms. I knew in my younger days the sculptor who made the statue of the youth which stands in the public garden. He was, as I remember, unable to tell directly what made him happy or unhappy, but by wonderful indirections he could tell. He rose one day, according to his habit, before the dawn, and saw the morning break, grand as the eternity out of which it came, and for many days after, he strove to express this tranquillity, and lo! his chisel had fashioned out of marble the form of a beautiful youth, Phosphorus,<sup>353</sup> whose aspect is such that it is said all persons who look on it become silent. The poet also resigns himself to his mood, and that thought which agitated him is expressed, but *alter idem*,<sup>354</sup> in a manner totally new. The expression is organic, or the new type which things themselves take when liberated. As, in the sun, objects paint their images on the retina of the eye, so they, sharing the aspiration of the whole universe, tend to paint a far more delicate copy of their essence in his mind. Like the metamorphosis of things into higher organic forms is their change into melodies. Over everything stands its dæmon<sup>355</sup> or soul, as the form of the thing is reflected by the eye, so the soul of the thing is reflected by a melody. The sea, the moun-

tain-ridge, Niagara, and every flower-bed, pre-exist, or super-exist,<sup>356</sup> in pre-cantations,<sup>357</sup> which sail like odors in the air, and when any man goes by with an ear sufficiently fine, he overhears them and endeavors to write down the notes without diluting or depraving them. And herein is the legitimization of criticism, in the mind's faith that the poems are a corrupt version of some text in nature with which they ought to be made to tally. A rhyme in one of our sonnets should not be less pleasing than the iterated nodes of a seashell, or the resembling difference of a group of flowers. The pairing of the birds is an idyl, not tedious as our idyls are; a tempest is a rough ode, without falsehood or rant; a summer, with its harvest sown, reaped and stored, is an epic song, subordinating how many admirably executed parts. Why should not the symmetry and truth that modulate these, glide into our spirits, and we participate the invention of nature?

<sup>20</sup> This insight, which expresses itself by what is called Imagination, is a very high sort of seeing, which does not come by study, but by the intellect being where and what it sees; by sharing the path or circuit of things through forms, and so making them translucent to others. The path of things is silent. Will they suffer a speaker to go with them? A spy they will not suffer; a lover, a poet, is the transcendence of their own nature,—him they will suffer. The condition of true naming, on the poet's part, is his resigning himself to the divine *aura* which breathes through forms, and accompanying that.

It is a secret which every intellectual man quickly learns, that beyond the energy of his possessed and conscious intellect he is capable of a new energy (as of an intellect doubled on itself), by abandonment to the nature of things; that beside his privacy of power as an individual man, there is a great public power on which he can draw, by unlocking, at all risks, his human doors, and suffering the ethereal tides to roll and circulate through him; then he is caught up into the life of the Universe, his speech is thunder, his thought is law, and his words are universally intelligible as the plants and animals. The poet knows that he speaks adequately then only when he speaks somewhat wildly, or "with the flower of the mind;" not with the intellect used as an organ, but with the intellect released from all service and suffered to take

<sup>353</sup> The morning star.

<sup>354</sup> In altered form, yet the same; a second self.

<sup>355</sup> Spirit.

<sup>356</sup> Exist in eternal form.

<sup>357</sup> Cantations or prophecies too fine for the human ear.



its direction from its celestial life; or as the ancients were wont to express themselves, not with intellect alone but with the intellect inebriated by nectar. As the traveller who has lost his way throws his reins on the horse's neck and trusts to the instinct of the animal to find his road, so must we do with the divine animal who carries us through this world. For if in any manner we can stimulate this instinct, new passages are opened for us into nature; the mind flows into and through things hardest and highest, and the metamorphosis is possible.

This is the reason why bards love wine, mead, narcotics, coffee, tea, opium, the fumes of sandalwood and tobacco, or whatever other procurers of animal exhilaration. All men avail themselves of such means as they can, to add this extraordinary power to their normal powers; and to this end they prize conversation, music, pictures, sculpture, dancing, theatres, travelling, war, mobs, fires, gaming, politics, or love, or science, or animal intoxication,—which are several coarser or finer *quasi-mechanical* substitutes for the true nectar, which is the ravishment of the intellect by coming nearer to the fact. These are auxiliaries to the centrifugal tendency of a man, to his passage out into free space, and they help him to escape the custody of that body in which he is pent up, and of that jail-yard of individual relations in which he is enclosed. Hence a great number of such as were professionally expressers of Beauty, as painters, poets, musicians and actors, have been more than others wont to lead a life of pleasure and indulgence; all but the few who received the true nectar; and, as it was a spurious mode of attaining freedom, as it was an emancipation not into the heavens but into the freedom of baser places, they were punished for that advantage they won, by a dissipation and deterioration. But never can any advantage be taken of nature by a trick. The spirit of the world, the great calm presence of the Creator, comes not forth to the sorceries of opium or of wine. The sublime vision comes to the pure and simple soul in a clean and chaste body. That is not an inspiration, which we owe to narcotics, but some counterfeit excitement and fury. Milton<sup>358</sup> says that the lyric poet may drink wine and live generously, but the epic poet, he who shall sing of the gods and their descent unto men, must drink water out of a wooden bowl. For poetry is not "Devil's wine," but God's wine. It is with this as it

<sup>358</sup> See his "Sixth Latin Elegy," ll. 55-78.

is with toys. We fill the hands and nurseries of our children with all manner of dolls, drums and horses; withdrawing their eyes from the plain face and sufficing objects of nature, the sun and moon, the animals, the water and stones, which should be their toys. So the poet's habit of living should be set on a key so low that the common influences should delight him. His cheerfulness should be the gift of the sunlight; the air should suffice for his inspiration, and he should be tipsy with water. That spirit which suffices quiet hearts, which seems to come forth to such from every dry knoll of sere grass, from every pine stump and half-imbedded stone on which the dull March sun shines, comes forth to the poor and hungry, and such as are of simple taste. If thou fill thy brain with Boston and New York, with fashion and covetousness, and wilt stimulate thy jaded senses with wine and French coffee, thou shalt find no radiance of wisdom in the lonely waste of the pine woods.

If the imagination intoxicates the poet, it is not inactive in other men. The metamorphosis excites in the beholder an emotion of joy. The use of symbols has a certain power of emancipation and exhilaration for all men. We seem to be touched by a wand which makes us dance and run about happily, like children. We are like persons who come out of a cave or cellar into the open air. This is the effect on us of tropes, fables, oracles and all poetic forms. Poets are thus liberating gods. Men have really got a new sense, and found within their world another world, or nest of worlds; for, the metamorphosis once seen, we divine that it does not stop. I will not now consider how much this makes the charm of algebra and the mathematics, which also have their tropes, but it is felt in every definition; as when Aristotle defines *space* to be an immovable vessel in which things are contained;—or when Plato defines a *line* to be a flowing point; or *figure* to be a bound of solid; and many the like. What a joyful sense of freedom we have when Vitruvius<sup>359</sup> announces the old opinion of artists that no architect can build any house well who does not know something of anatomy. When Socrates, in Charmides,<sup>360</sup> tells us that the soul is cured of its maladies by certain incantations, and that these incantations are beautiful reasons, from which temper-

<sup>359</sup> Marcus Vitruvius Pollio, a Roman architect and engineer of the first century B.C., and author of *De Architectura*. The reference is to p. 395.

<sup>360</sup> One of the dialogues of Plato, as is also *Timæus*, mentioned a few lines below.

ance is generated in souls; when Plato calls the world an animal, and Timæus affirms that the plants also are animals; or affirms a man to be a heavenly tree, growing with his root, which is his head, upward; and, as George Chapman, following him, writes,

"So in our tree of man, whose nerve root  
Springs in his top;"<sup>361</sup>

when Orpheus<sup>362</sup> speaks of hoariness as "that white flower which marks extreme old age;" when Proclus<sup>363</sup> calls the universe the statue of the intellect; when Chaucer, in his praise of "Gentilesse,"<sup>364</sup> compares good blood in mean condition to fire, which, though carried to the darkest house betwixt this and the mount of Caucasus, will yet hold its natural office and burn as bright as if twenty thousand men did it behold; when John saw, in the Apocalypse,<sup>365</sup> the ruin of the world through evil, and the stars fall from heaven as the fig tree casteth her untimely fruit; when Æsop reports the whole catalogue of common daily relations through the masquerade of birds and beasts;—we take the cheerful hint of the immortality of our essence and its versatile habit and escapes, as when the gypsies say of themselves "it is in vain to hang them, they cannot die."

The poets are thus liberating gods. The ancient British bards had for the title of their order, "Those who are free throughout the world." They are free, and they make free. An imaginative book renders us much more service at first, by stimulating us through its tropes, than afterward when we arrive at the precise sense of the author. I think nothing is of any value in books excepting the transcendental and extraordinary. If a man is inflamed and carried away by his thought, to that degree that he forgets the authors and the public and heeds only this one dream which holds him like an insanity, let me read his paper, and you may have all the arguments and histories and criticism. All the value which attaches to Pythagoras,<sup>366</sup> Paracelsus,<sup>367</sup> Cornelius Agrippa,<sup>368</sup>

Cardan,<sup>369</sup> Kepler,<sup>370</sup> Swedenborg,<sup>371</sup> Schelling,<sup>372</sup> Oken,<sup>373</sup> or any other who introduces questionable facts into his cosmogony, as angels, devils, magic, astrology, palmistry, mesmerism, and so on, is the certificate we have of departure from routine, and that here is a new witness. That also is the best success in conversation, the magic of liberty, which puts the world like a ball in our hands. How cheap even the liberty then seems; how mean to study, when an emotion communicates to the intellect the power to sap and upheave nature; how great the perspective! nations, times, systems, enter and disappear like threads in tapestry of large figure and many colors; dream delivers us to dream, and while the drunkenness lasts we will sell our bed, our philosophy, our religion, in our opulence.

There is good reason why we should prize this liberation. The fate of the poor shepherd, who, blinded and lost in the snow-storm, perishes in a drift within a few feet of his cottage door, is an emblem of the state of man. On the brink of the waters of life and truth, we are miserably dying. The inaccessibility of every thought but that we are in, is wonderful. What if you come near to it; you are as remote when you are nearest as when you are farthest. Every thought is also a prison; every heaven is also a prison. Therefore we love the poet, the inventor, who in any form, whether in an ode or in an action or in looks and behavior, has yielded us a new thought. He unlocks our chains and admits us to a new scene.

This emancipation is dear to all men, and the power to impart it, as it must come from greater depth and scope of thought, is a measure of intellect. Therefore all books of the imagination endure, all which ascend to that truth that the writer sees nature beneath him, and uses it as his exponent. Every verse or sentence possessing this virtue will take care of its own immortality. The religions of the world are the ejaculations of a few imaginative men.

But the quality of the imagination is to flow, and not to freeze. The poet did not stop at the color or the form, but read their meaning; neither may he rest

<sup>361</sup> Quoted from the dedication to the translation of Homer by George Chapman (1559?–1634).

<sup>362</sup> Orpheus, founder of a religious sect in Greece in the sixth century B.C.

<sup>363</sup> Neo-Platonic Greek philosopher (410–485).

<sup>364</sup> A reference, not to Chaucer's short poem on "Gentilesse," but to the "Wife of Bath's Tale," ll. 283–289, 1130.

<sup>365</sup> See Revelation 6:13.

<sup>366</sup> Greek philosopher of the sixth century B.C.

<sup>367</sup> Paracelsus (1490?–1541), a German physician and philosopher, accused of dabbling in black magic.

<sup>368</sup> Agrippa (1486–1535), German physician and magician.

<sup>369</sup> Jerome Cardan (1501–76), Italian physician and philosopher.

<sup>370</sup> Johann Kepler (1571–1630), distinguished German astronomer and proponent of the Copernican theory.

<sup>371</sup> Swedenborg (1688–1772), Swedish religious leader.

<sup>372</sup> Friedrich Schelling (1775–1854), German romantic transcendental philosopher.

<sup>373</sup> Lorenz Oken (1779–1851), German naturalist and philosopher, and early exponent of the cellular structure of organisms.

in this meaning, but he makes the same objects exponents of his new thought. Here is the difference betwixt the poet and the mystic, that the last nails a symbol to one sense, which was a true sense for a moment, but soon becomes old and false. For all symbols are fluxional;<sup>374</sup> all language is vehicular<sup>375</sup> and transitive,<sup>376</sup> and is good, as ferries and horses are, for conveyance, not as farms and houses are, for homestead. Mysticism consists in the mistake of an accidental and individual symbol for an universal one. The morning-redness happens to be the favorite meteor to the eyes of Jacob Boehme,<sup>377</sup> and comes to stand to him for truth and faith; and, he believes, should stand for the same realities to every reader. But the first reader prefers as naturally the symbol of a mother and child, or a gardener and his bulb, or a jeweller polishing a gem. Either of these, or of a myriad more, are equally good to the person to whom they are significant. Only they must be held lightly, and be very willingly translated into the equivalent terms which others use. And the mystic must be steadily told,—All that you say is just as true without the tedious use of that symbol as with it. Let us have a little algebra, instead of this trite rhetoric,—universal signs, instead of these village symbols,—and we shall both be gainers. The history of hierarchies<sup>378</sup> seems to show that all religious error consisted in making the symbol too stark and solid, and was at last nothing but an excess of the organ of language.

Swedenborg, of all men in the recent ages, stands so eminently for the translator of nature into thought. I do not know the man in history to whom things stood so uniformly for words. Before him the metamorphosis continually plays. Everything on which his eye rests, obeys the impulses of moral nature. The figs become grapes whilst he eats them. When some of his angels affirmed a truth, the laurel twig which they held blossomed in their hands. The noise which at a distance appeared like gnashing and thumping, on coming nearer was found to be the voice of disputants. The men in one of his visions, seen in heavenly light, appeared like dragons, and seemed in darkness; but to each other they appeared as men, and when the light from heaven shone into their

cabin, they complained of the darkness, and were compelled to shut the window that they might see.

There was this perception in him which makes the poet or seer an object of awe and terror, namely that the same man or society of men may wear one aspect to themselves and their companions, and a different aspect to higher intelligences. Certain priests, whom he describes as conversing very learnedly together, appeared to the children who were at some distance, like dead horses; and many the like misappearances. And instantly the mind inquires whether these fishes under the bridge, yonder oxen in the pasture, those dogs in the yard, are immutably fishes, oxen and dogs, or only so appear to me, and perchance to themselves appear upright men; and whether I appear as a man to all eyes. The Brahmins<sup>379</sup> and Pythagoras<sup>380</sup> propounded the same question, and if any poet has witnessed the transformation he doubtless found it in harmony with various experiences. We have all seen changes as considerable in wheat and caterpillars. He is the poet and shall draw us with love and terror, who sees through the flowing vest the firm nature, and can declare it.

I look in vain for the poet whom I describe. We do not with sufficient plainness or sufficient profoundness address ourselves to life, nor dare we chaunt our own times and social circumstance. If we filled the day with bravery, we should not shrink from celebrating it. Time and nature yield us many gifts, but not yet the timely man, the new religion, the reconciler, whom all things await. Dante's praise is that he dared to write his autobiography in colossal cipher, or into universality. We have yet had no genius in America, with tyrannous eye, which knew the value of our incomparable materials, and saw, in the barbarism and materialism of the times, another carnival of the same gods whose picture he so much admires in Homer; then in the Middle Age; then in Calvinism. Banks and tariffs, the newspaper and caucus, Methodism and Unitarianism, are flat and dull to dull people, but rest on the same foundations of wonder as the town of Troy and the temple of Delphi,<sup>381</sup> and are as swiftly passing away. Our log-rolling, our stumps and their politics, our fisheries,

<sup>374</sup> Flowing.

<sup>375</sup> In the sense of conveying something.

<sup>376</sup> Carrying across, as the meaning conveyed from speaker to hearer.

<sup>377</sup> A reference to *Aurora, oder die Morgenröte im Aufgang*, by Boehme (1575-1624), a German mystic.

<sup>378</sup> Systems of graded or ranked priesthoods.

<sup>379</sup> Ordinarily, highly cultivated intellectuals, or Hindus of the highest caste.

<sup>380</sup> Pythagoras (582-aft. 507 B.C.), Greek philosopher and mathematician, who taught that earthly life is only a purification of the soul.

<sup>381</sup> The oracle at Delphi, supposed to be the voice of Apollo.

our Negroes and Indians, our boa[s]ts and our repudiations, the wrath of rogues and the pusillanimity of honest men, the northern trade, the southern planting, the western clearing, Oregon and Texas,<sup>382</sup> are yet unsung. Yet America is a poem in our eyes; its ample geography dazzles the imagination, and it will not wait long for metres. If I have not found that excellent combination of gifts in my countrymen which I seek, neither could I aid myself to fix the idea of the poet by reading now and then in Chalmers's collection<sup>383</sup> of five centuries of English poets. These are wits more than poets, though there have been poets among them. But when we adhere to the ideal of the poet, we have our difficulties even with Milton and Homer. Milton is too literary, and Homer too literal and historical.

But I am not wise enough for a national criticism, and must use the old largeness a little longer, to discharge my errand from the muse to the poet concerning his art.

Art is the path of the creator to his work. The paths or methods are ideal and eternal, though few men ever see them; not the artist himself for years, or for a lifetime, unless he come into the conditions. The painter, the sculptor, the composer, the epic rhapsodist, the orator, all partake one desire, namely to express themselves symmetrically and abundantly, not dwarfishly and fragmentarily. They found or put themselves in certain conditions, as, the painter and sculptor before some impressive human figures; the orator into the assembly of the people; and the others in such scenes as each has found exciting to his intellect; and each presently feels the new desire. He hears a voice, he sees a beckoning. Then he is appraised, with wonder, what herds of dæmons hem him in. He can no more rest; he says, with the old painter, "By God it is in me and must go forth of me." He pursues a beauty, half seen, which flies before him. The poet pours out verses in every solitude. Most of the things he says are conventional, no doubt; but by and by he says something which is original and beautiful. That charms him. He would say nothing else but such things. In our way of talking we say "That is yours, this is mine;" but the poet knows well that

it is not his; that it is as strange and beautiful to him as to you; he would fain hear the like eloquence at length. Once having tasted this immortal ichor,<sup>384</sup> he cannot have enough of it, and as an admirable creative power exists in these intellections, it is of the last importance that these things get spoken. What a little of all we know is said! What drops of all the sea of our science are baled up! and by what accident it is that these are exposed, when so many secrets sleep in nature! Hence the necessity of speech and song; hence these throbs and heart-beatings in the orator, at the door of the assembly, to the end namely that thought may be ejaculated as Logos,<sup>385</sup> or Word.

Doubt not, O poet, but persist. Say "It is in me, and shall out." Stand there, balked and dumb, stuttering and stammering, hissed and hooted, stand and strive, until at last rage draw out of thee that *dream*-power which every night shows thee is thine own; a power transcending all limit and privacy, and by virtue of which a man is the conductor of the whole river of electricity. Nothing walks, or creeps, or grows, or exists, which must not in turn arise and walk before him as exponent of his meaning. Comes he to that power, his genius is no longer exhaustible. All the creatures by pairs and by tribes pour into his mind as into a Noah's ark,<sup>386</sup> to come forth again to people a new world. This is like the stock of air for our respiration or for the combustion of our fireplace; not a measure of gallons, but the entire atmosphere if wanted. And therefore the rich poets<sup>387</sup> as Homer, Chaucer, Shakspeare, and Raphael, have obviously no limits to their works except the limits of their lifetime, and resemble a mirror carried through the street, ready to render an image of every created thing.

O poet! a new nobility is conferred in groves and pastures, and not in castles or by the sword-blade<sup>388</sup> any longer. The conditions are hard, but equal. Thou shalt leave the world, and know the muse only. Thou shalt not know any longer the times, customs, graces, politics, or opinions of men, but shalt take all from

<sup>384</sup> The blood of the gods.

<sup>385</sup> See John 1:1: "In the beginning was the Word [Logos], and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

<sup>386</sup> See Genesis 6:19.

<sup>387</sup> In the Greek sense of makers, so as to include a painter like Raphael (1483-1520) of Italy.

<sup>388</sup> A reference to the practice of "dubbing" a warrior by striking him on the shoulder with a sword, thus making him a knight.

<sup>382</sup> Oregon and Texas provided topics of especial interest at the time. The Oregon boundary dispute with England was settled in 1846, and Texas was admitted to the Union in 1845.

<sup>383</sup> Collection, in twenty-one volumes, of English poets from Chaucer to Cowper, published in 1810, and edited by Alexander Chalmers (1759-1834).

the muse. For the time of towns is tolled from the world by funereal chimes, but in nature the universal hours are counted by succeeding tribes of animals and plants, and by growth of joy on joy. God wills also that thou abdicate a manifold and duplex life, and that thou be content that others speak for thee. Others shall be thy gentlemen and shall represent all courtesy and worldly life for thee; others shall do the great and resounding actions also. Thou shalt lie close hid with nature, and canst not be afforded to 10 the Capitol or the Exchange.<sup>389</sup> The world is full of renunciations and apprenticeships, and this is thine; thou must pass for a fool and a churl for a long season. This is the screen and sheath in which Pan<sup>390</sup> has protected his well-beloved flower, and thou shalt be known only to thine own, and they shall console thee with tenderest love. And thou shalt not be able to rehearse the names of thy friends in thy verse, for an old shame before the holy ideal. And this is

the reward; that the ideal shall be real to thee, and the impressions of the actual world shall fall like summer rain, copious, but not troublesome to thy invulnerable essence. Thou shalt have the whole land for thy park and manor, the sea for thy bath and navigation, without tax and without envy; the woods and the rivers thou shalt own, and thou shalt possess that wherein others are only tenants and boarders. Thou true land-lord! sea-lord! air-lord! Wherever snow falls or water flows or birds fly, wherever day and night meet in twilight, wherever the blue heaven is hung by clouds or sown with stars, wherever are forms with transparent boundaries, wherever are outlets into celestial space, wherever is danger, and awe, and love,—there is Beauty, plenteous as rain, shed for thee, and though thou shouldst walk the world over, thou shalt not be able to find a condition inopportune or ignoble.

1844

FROM

*English Traits*

Coleridge, Carlyle, Wordsworth

From London, on the 5th August [1833]. I went to Highgate, and wrote a note to Mr. Coleridge, requesting leave to pay my respects to him. It was near noon. Mr. Coleridge sent a verbal message that he was in bed, but if I would call after one o'clock he would see me. I returned at one, and he appeared, a short, thick old man, with bright blue eyes and fine clear complexion, leaning on his cane. He took snuff freely, which presently soiled his cravat and neat 30 black suit. He asked whether I knew Allston,<sup>391</sup> and spoke warmly of his merits and doings when he knew him in Rome; what a master of the Titianesque he was, etc., etc. He spoke of Dr. Channing.<sup>392</sup> It was an unspeakable misfortune that he should have turned out a Unitarian after all. On this, he burst into a declamation on the folly and ignorance of Unitarianism,—its high unreasonableness; and taking up Bishop Waterland's book, which lay on the

20 table, he read with vehemence two or three pages written by himself in the fly-leaves,—passages, too, which, I believe, are printed in the *Aids to Reflection*. When he stopped to take breath, I interposed that "whilst I highly valued all his explanations, I was bound to tell him that I was born and bred a Unitarian." "Yes," he said, "I supposed so;" and continued as before. It was a wonder that after so many ages of unquestioning acquiescence in the doctrine of St. Paul,—the doctrine of the Trinity, which was also according to Philo Judæus<sup>393</sup> the doctrine of the Jews before Christ,—this handful of Priestcleians should take on themselves to deny it, etc., etc. He was very sorry that Dr. Channing, a man to whom he looked up,—no, to say that he looked *up* to him would be to speak falsely, but a man whom he looked 40 *at* with so much interest,—should embrace such views. When he saw Dr. Channing he had hinted to him that he was afraid he loved Christianity for what was lovely and excellent,—he loved the good in it, and not the true;—"And I tell you, sir, that I have known ten persons who loved the good, for one person who loved the true; but it is a far greater virtue to love the true for itself alone, than to love the good

<sup>389</sup> Public life or business.<sup>390</sup> Greek god of wild nature.<sup>391</sup> Washington Allston (1779-1843), American artist, poet, critical essayist, and lecturer on art.<sup>392</sup> William Ellery Channing (1780-1842), leading American Unitarian divine and writer who attacked the doctrine of the Trinity and preached the divinity of man.<sup>393</sup> A Jewish Hellenistic philosopher (20 B.C.?-A.D. 54).

for itself alone." He (Coleridge) knew all about Unitarianism perfectly well, because he had once been a Unitarian and knew what quackery it was. He had been called "the rising star of Unitarianism." He went on defining, or rather refining: "The Trinitarian doctrine was realism; the idea of God was not essential, but super-essential;" talked of *Trinism* and *tetramorphism* and much more, of which I only caught this, "that the will was that by which a person is a person; because, if one should push me in the street, and so I should force the man next me into the kennel, I should at once exclaim, I did not do it, sir, meaning it was not my will." And this also, that "if you should insist on your faith here in England, and I on mine, mine would be the hotter side of the fagot."

I took advantage of a pause to say that he had many readers of all religious opinions in America, and I proceeded to inquire if the "extract" from the Independent's pamphlet, in the third volume of the Friend,<sup>394</sup> were a veritable quotation. He replied that it was really taken from a pamphlet in his possession entitled "A Protest of one of the Independents," or something to that effect. I told him how excellent I thought it and how much I wished to see the entire work. "Yes," he said, "the man was a chaos of truths, but lacked the knowledge that God was a God of order. Yet the passage would no doubt strike you more in the quotation than in the original, for I have filtered it."

When I rose to go, he said, "I do not know whether you care about poetry, but I will repeat some verses I lately made on my baptismal anniversary," and he recited with strong emphasis, standing, ten or twelve lines beginning,—

"Born unto God in Christ—"

He inquired where I had been travelling; and on learning that I had been in Malta and Sicily, he compared one island with the other, repeating what he had said to the Bishop of London when he returned from that country, that Sicily was an excellent school of political economy; for, in any town there, it only needed to ask what the government enacted, and reverse that, to know what ought to be done; it was the most felicitously opposite legislation to anything good and wise. There were only three things which

the government had brought into that garden of delights, namely, itch, pox and famine. Whereas in Malta, the force of law and mind was seen, in making that barren rock of semi-Saracen inhabitants the seat of population and plenty. Going out, he showed me in the next apartment a picture of Allston's and told me that Montague, a picture-dealer, once came to see him, and glancing towards this, said, "Well, you have got a picture!" thinking it the work of an old master; afterwards, Montague, still talking with his back to the canvas, put up his hand and touched it and exclaimed, "By Heaven! this picture is not ten years old:"—so delicate and skilful was that man's touch.

I was in his company for about an hour, but find it impossible to recall the largest part of the discourse, which was often like so many printed paragraphs in his book,—perhaps the same,—so readily did he fall into certain commonplaces. As I might have foreseen, the visit was rather a spectacle than a conversation, of no use beyond the satisfaction of my curiosity. He was old and preoccupied, and could not bend to a new companion and think with him.

From Edinburgh I went to the Highlands. On my return I came from Glasgow to Dumfries, and being intent on delivering a letter which I had brought from Rome, inquired for Craigenputtock. It was a farm in Nithsdale, in the parish of Dunscore, sixteen miles distant. No public coach passed near it, so I took a private carriage from the inn. I found the house amid desolate heathery hills, where the lonely scholar nourished his mighty heart.<sup>395</sup> Carlyle was a man from his youth, an author who did not need to hide from his readers, and as absolute a man of the world, unknown and exiled on that hill-farm, as if holding on his own terms what is best in London. He was tall and gaunt, with a cliff-like brow, self-possessed and holding his extraordinary powers of conversation in easy command; clinging to his northern accent with evident relish; full of lively anecdote and with a streaming humor which floated every thing he looked upon. His talk playfully exalting the familiar objects, put the companion at once into an acquaintance with his Lars and Lemurs, and it was very pleasant to learn what was predestined to be a pretty

<sup>394</sup> *The Friend*, a series of essays by Coleridge, finally published in 1809-10; revised and enlarged, 1818.

<sup>395</sup> In his journal Emerson wrote on August 26, 1833: "A white day in my years. I found the youth I sought in Scotland, and good and wise and pleasant he seems to me."

mythology. Few were the objects and lonely the man; "not a person to speak to within sixteen miles except the minister of Dunscore," so that books inevitably made his topics.

He had names of his own for all the matters familiar to his discourse. Blackwood's was the "sand magazine;" Fraser's nearer approach to possibility of life was the "mud magazine;" a piece of road near by, that marked some failed enterprise, was the "grave of the last sixpence." When too much praise of any genius annoyed him he professed hugely to admire the talent shown by his pig. He had spent much time and contrivance in confining the poor beast to one enclosure in his pen, but pig, by great strokes of judgment, had found out how to let a board down, and had foiled him. For all that he still thought man the most plastic little fellow in the planet, and he liked Nero's death, "*Qualis artifex pereo!*"<sup>396</sup> better than most history. He worships a man that will manifest any truth to him. At one time<sup>20</sup> he had inquired and read a good deal about America. Landor's<sup>397</sup> principle was mere rebellion; and *that* he feared was the American principle. The best thing he knew of that country was that in it a man can have meat for his labor. He had read in Stewart's book<sup>398</sup> that when he inquired in a New York hotel for the Boots,<sup>399</sup> he had been shown across the street and had found Mungo<sup>400</sup> in his own house dining on roast turkey.

We talked of books. Plato he does not read, and he disparaged Socrates; and, when pressed, persisted in making Mirabeau<sup>401</sup> a hero. Gibbon<sup>402</sup> he called the "splendid bridge from the old world to the new." His own reading had been multifarious. Tristram Shandy<sup>403</sup> was one of his first books after Robinson Crusoe,<sup>404</sup> and Robertson's *America*<sup>405</sup> an early

favorite. Rousseau's<sup>406</sup> *Confessions* had discovered to him that he was not a dunce; and it was now ten years since he had learned German, by the advice of a man who told him he would find in that language what he wanted.

He took despairing or satirical views of literature at this moment; recounted the incredible sums paid in one year by the great booksellers for puffing. Hence it comes that no newspaper is trusted now, no books are bought, and the booksellers are on the eve of bankruptcy.

He still returned to English pauperism, the crowded country, the selfish abdication by public men of all that public persons should perform. Government should direct poor men what to do. Poor Irish folk come wandering over these moors. My dame makes it a rule to give to every son of Adam bread to eat, and supplies his wants to the next house. But here are thousands of acres which might give them all meat, and nobody to bid these poor Irish go to the moor and till it. They burned the stacks and so found a way to force the rich people to attend to them.

We went out to walk over long hills, and looked at Criffel, then without his cap, and down into Wordsworth's country. There we sat down and talked of the immortality of the soul. It was not Carlyle's fault that we talked on that topic, for he had the natural disinclination of every nimble spirit to bruise itself against walls, and did not like to place himself where no step can be taken. But he was honest and true, and cognizant of the subtle links that bind ages together, and saw how every event affects all the future. "Christ died on the tree; that built Dunscore kirk yonder; that brought you and me together. Time has only a relative existence."

He was already turning his eyes towards London with a scholar's appreciation. London is the heart of the world, he said, wonderful only from the mass of human beings. He liked the huge machine. Each keeps its own round. The baker's boy brings muffins to the window at a fixed hour every day, and that is all the Londoner knows or wishes to know on the subject. But it turned out good men. He named certain individuals, especially one man of letters, his friend, the best mind he knew, whom London had well served.

<sup>406</sup> Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-78), French philosopher.

<sup>396</sup> "What an artificer lies in me," quoted from Suetonius, *De Vita Caesarum*, vi, 49.

<sup>397</sup> Walter Savage Landor (1775-1864), whom Emerson had met in Rome earlier in 1833.

<sup>398</sup> A reference to John Stewart (1749-1822), whom Carlyle<sup>40</sup> knew personally and whose travels he had read.

<sup>399</sup> A servant, a hotel employee, whose duty usually includes the shining of boots and shoes.

<sup>400</sup> A typical name for a black servant or slave.

<sup>401</sup> Honoré Gabriel Victor Riquette, Count de Mirabeau (1749-91), French orator and revolutionary leader.

<sup>402</sup> Edward Gibbon (1737-94), English historian, author of *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776).

<sup>403</sup> A novel by Laurence Sterne (1713-68).

<sup>404</sup> A novel by Daniel Defoe (1661?-1731).

<sup>405</sup> William Robertson's *History of America*, 2 vols., originally published in London in 1777, and frequently reprinted.



On the 28th August I went to Rydal Mount, to pay my respects to Mr. Wordsworth. His daughters called in their father, a plain, elderly, white-haired man, not prepossessing, and disfigured by green goggles. He sat down, and talked with great simplicity. He had just returned from a journey. His health was good, but he had broken a tooth by a fall, when walking with two lawyers, and had said that he was glad it did not happen forty years ago; whereupon they had praised his philosophy.

He had much to say of America, the more that it gave occasion for his favorite topic,—that society is being enlightened by a superficial tuition, out of all proportion to its being restrained by moral culture. Schools do no good. Tuition is not education. He thinks more of the education of circumstances than of tuition. 'T is not question whether there are offences of which the law takes cognizance, but whether there are offences of which the law does not take cognizance. Sin is what he fears,—and how society is to escape without gravest mischiefs from this source. He has even said, what seemed a paradox, that they needed a civil war in America, to teach the necessity of knitting the social ties stronger. "There may be," he said, "in America some vulgarity in manner, but that's not important. That comes of the pioneer state of things. But I fear they are too much given to the making of money; and secondly, to politics; that they make political distinction the end and not the means. And I fear they lack a class 30 of men of leisure,—in short, of gentlemen,—to give a tone of honor to the community. I am told that things are boasted of in the second class of society there, which, in England,—God knows, are done in England every day, but would never be spoken of. In America I wish to know not how many churches or schools, but what newspapers? My friend Colonel Hamilton, at the foot of the hill, who was a year in America, assures me that the newspapers are atrocious, and accuse members of Congress of stealing 40 spoons!" He was against taking off the tax on newspapers in England,—which the reformers represent as a tax upon knowledge,—for this reason, that they would be inundated with base prints. He said he talked on political aspects, for he wished to impress on me and all good Americans to cultivate the moral, the conservative, etc., etc., and never to call into action the physical strength of the people, as had just

now been done in England in the Reform Bill,—a thing prophesied by Delolme.<sup>407</sup> He alluded once or twice to his conversation with Dr. Channing, who had recently visited him (laying his hand on a particular chair in which the Doctor had sat).

The conversation turned on books. Lucretius<sup>408</sup> he esteems a far higher poet than Virgil,<sup>409</sup> not in his system, which is nothing, but in his power of illustration. Faith is necessary to explain anything and to 10 reconcile the foreknowledge of God with human evil. Of Cousin<sup>410</sup> (whose lectures we had all been reading in Boston), he knew only the name.

I inquired if he had read Carlyle's critical articles and translations. He said he thought him sometimes insane. He proceeded to abuse Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* heartily. It was full of all manner of fornication. It was like the crossing of flies in the air. He had never gone farther than the first part: so disgusted was he that he threw the book across the room. I deprecated this wrath, and said what I could for the better parts of the book, and he courteously promised to look at it again. Carlyle he said wrote most obscurely. He was clever and deep, but he defied the sympathies of every body. Even Mr. Coleridge wrote more clearly, though he had always wished Coleridge would write more to be understood. He led me out into his garden, and showed me the gravel walk in which thousands of his lines were composed. His eyes are much inflamed. This is no loss except for reading, because he never writes prose, and of poetry he carries even hundreds of lines in his head before writing them. He had just returned from a visit to Staffa, and within three days had made three sonnets on Fingal's Cave, and was composing a fourth when he was called in to see me. He said, "If you are interested in my verses perhaps you will like to hear these lines." I gladly assented, and he recollected himself for a few moments and then stood forth and repeated, one after the other, the three entire sonnets with great animation. I fancied the second and third more beautiful than his poems are wont to be. The third is addressed to the flowers, which, he said, especially the ox-eye daisy, are very abundant on the top

<sup>407</sup> Jean Louis Delolme (1740-1806), Swiss writer on the Constitution of England.

<sup>408</sup> Lucretius Carus (96-55 B.C.), a Roman poet and philosopher.

<sup>409</sup> Publius Vergilius (70-19 B.C.), Roman poet and author of the *Aeneid*.

<sup>410</sup> Victor Cousin (1792-1867), French eclectic philosopher.



of the rock. The second alludes to the name of the cave, which is "Cave of Music;" the first to the circumstance of its being visited by the promiscuous company of the steamboat.

This recitation was so unlooked for and surprising,—he, the old Wordsworth, standing apart, and reciting to me in a garden-walk, like a school-boy declaiming,—that I at first was near to laugh; but recollecting myself, that I had come thus far to see a poet and he was chanting poems to me, I saw that he was right and I was wrong, and gladly gave myself up to hear. I told him how much the few printed extracts had quickened the desire to possess his unpublished poems. He replied he never was in haste to publish; partly because he corrected a good deal, and every alteration is ungraciously received after printing; but what he had written would be printed, whether he lived or died. I said *Tintern Abbey* appeared to be the favorite poem with the public, but more contemplative readers preferred the first books of the *Excursion*, and the *Sonnets*. He said, "Yes, they are better." He preferred such of his poems as touched the affections, to any others; for whatever is didactic—what theories of society, and so on—might perish quickly; but whatever combined a truth with an affection was *καλὸν ἐς αἰεὶ*,<sup>411</sup> good to-day and good forever. He cited the sonnet, *On the feelings of a high-minded Spaniard*, which he preferred to any other (I

so understood him), and the *Two Voices*; and quoted, with evident pleasure, the verses addressed To the *Skylark*. In this connection he said of the Newtonian<sup>412</sup> theory that it might yet be superseded and forgotten; and Dalton's<sup>413</sup> atomic theory.

When I prepared to depart he said he wished to show me what a common person in England could do, and he led me into the enclosure of his clerk, a young man to whom he had given this slip of ground, which was laid out, or its natural capabilities shown, with much taste. He then said he would show me a better way towards the inn; and he walked a good part of a mile, talking and ever and anon stopping short to impress the word or the verse, and finally parted from me with great kindness and returned across the fields.

Wordsworth honored himself by his simple adherence to truth, and was very willing not to shine; but he surprised by the hard limits of his thought. To judge from a single conversation, he made the impression of a narrow and very English mind; of one who paid for his rare elevation by general tameness and conformity. Off his own beat, his opinions were of no value. It is not very rare to find persons loving sympathy and ease, who expiate their departure from the common in one direction, by their conformity in every other.

1856

### Thoreau<sup>414</sup>

A queen rejoices in her peers,  
And wary Nature knows her own,  
By court and city, dale and down,  
And like a lover volunteers,  
And to her son will treasures more,  
And more to purpose, freely pour  
In one wood walk, than learned men  
Will find with glass in ten times ten.

It seemed as if the breezes brought him,  
It seemed as if the sparrows taught him,  
As if by secret sign he knew  
Where in far fields the orchis grew.

Henry David Thoreau was the last male descendant of a French ancestor who came to this country

from the Isle of Guernsey. His character exhibited  
30 occasional traits drawn from this blood, in singular combination with a very strong Saxon genius.

He was born in Concord, Massachusetts, on the 12th of July, 1817. He was graduated at Harvard College in 1837, but without any literary distinction. An iconoclast in literature, he seldom thanked colleges for their service to him, holding them in small esteem, whilst yet his debt to them was important. After leaving the University, he joined his brother in teaching a private school, which he soon renounced.  
40 His father was a manufacturer of lead-pencils, and Henry applied himself for a time to this craft, believ-

<sup>412</sup> Sir Isaac Newton (1642-1727), English philosopher and mathematician.

<sup>413</sup> John Dalton (1766-1844), English chemist and physicist.

<sup>414</sup> Spoken by Emerson at the funeral services of Thoreau in 1862.

<sup>411</sup> "A possession for ever."—Thucydides, *History*, I, xx, 4.

ing he could make a better pencil than was then in use. After completing his experiments, he exhibited his work to chemists and artists in Boston, and having obtained their certificates to its excellence and to its equality with the best London manufacture, he returned home contented. His friends congratulated him that he had now opened his way to fortune. But he replied that he should never make another pencil. "Why should I? I would not do again what I have done once." He resumed his endless walks and miscellaneous studies, making every day some new acquaintance with Nature, though as yet never speaking of zoölogy or botany, since, though very studious of natural facts, he was incurious of technical and textual science.

At this time, a strong, healthy youth, fresh from college, whilst all his companions were choosing their profession, or eager to begin some lucrative employment, it was inevitable that his thoughts should be exercised on the same question, and it required rare decision to refuse all the accustomed paths and keep his solitary freedom at the cost of disappointing the natural expectations of his family and friends: all the more difficult that he had a perfect probity, was exact in securing his own independence, and in holding every man to the like duty. But Thoreau never faltered. He was a born protestant. He declined to give up his large ambition of knowledge and action for any narrow craft or profession, aiming at a much more comprehensive calling, the art of living well. If he slighted and defied the opinions of others, it was only that he was more intent to reconcile his practice with his own belief. Never idle or self-indulgent, he preferred, when he wanted money, earning it by some piece of manual labor agreeable to him, as building a boat or a fence, planting, grafting, surveying or other short work, to any long engagements. With his hardy habits and few wants, his skill in wood-craft, and his powerful arithmetic, he was very competent to live in any part of the world. It would cost him less time to supply his wants than another. He was therefore secure of his leisure.

A natural skill for mensuration, growing out of his mathematical knowledge and his habit of ascertaining the measures and distances of objects which interested him, the size of trees, the depth and extent of ponds and rivers, the height of mountains and the air-line distance of his favorite summits,—this, and

his intimate knowledge of the territory about Concord, made him drift into the profession of land-surveyor. It had the advantage for him that it led him continually into new and secluded grounds, and helped his studies of Nature. His accuracy and skill in this work were readily appreciated, and he found all the employment he wanted.

He could easily solve the problems of the surveyor, but he was daily beset with graver questions, which he manfully confronted. He interrogated every custom, and wished to settle all his practice on an ideal foundation. He was a protestant *à outrance*,<sup>415</sup> and few lives contain so many renunciations. He was bred to no profession; he never married; he lived alone; he never went to church; he never voted; he refused to pay a tax to the State; he ate no flesh, he drank no wine, he never knew the use of tobacco; and, though a naturalist, he used neither trap nor gun. He chose, wisely no doubt for himself, to be the bachelor of thought and Nature. He had no talent for wealth, and knew how to be poor without the least hint of squalor or inelegance. Perhaps he fell into his way of living without forecasting it much, but approved it with later wisdom. "I am often reminded," he wrote in his journal, "that if I had bestowed on me the wealth of Croesus,<sup>416</sup> my aims must be still the same, and my means essentially the same." He had no temptations to fight against,—no appetites, no passions, no taste for elegant trifles. A fine house, dress, the manners and talk of highly cultivated people were all thrown away on him. He much preferred a good Indian, and considered these refinements as impediments to conversation, wishing to meet his companion on the simplest terms. He declined invitations to dinner-parties, because there each was in every one's way, and he could not meet the individuals to any purpose. "They make their pride," he said, "in making their dinner cost much; I make my pride in making my dinner cost little." When asked at a table what dish he preferred, he answered, "The nearest." He did not like the taste of wine, and never had a vice in his life. He said,—"have a faint recollection of pleasure derived from smoking dried lily-stems, before I was a man. I had commonly a supply of these. I have never smoked anything more noxious."

<sup>415</sup> To the bitter end.

<sup>416</sup> A king of Lydia in the sixth century B.C., possessed of great wealth.

He chose to be rich by making his wants few, and supplying them himself. In his travels, he used the railroad only to get over so much country as was unimportant to the present purpose, walking hundreds of miles, avoiding taverns, buying a lodging in farmers' and fishermen's houses, as cheaper, and more agreeable to him, and because there he could better find the men and the information he wanted.

There was somewhat military in his nature, not to be subdued, always manly and able, but rarely tender, as if he did not feel himself except in opposition. He wanted a fallacy to expose, a blunder to pillory, I may say required a little sense of victory, a roll of the drum, to call his powers into full exercise. It cost him nothing to say No; indeed he found it much easier than to say Yes. It seemed as if his first instinct on hearing a proposition was to controvert it, so impatient was he of the limitations of our daily thought. This habit, of course, is a little chilling to the social affections; and though the companion would in the end acquit him of any malice or untruth, yet it mars conversation. Hence, no equal companion stood in affectionate relations with one so pure and guileless. "I love Henry," said one of his friends, "but I cannot like him; and as for taking his arm, I should as soon think of taking the arm of an elm-tree."

Yet, hermit and stoic as he was, he was really fond of sympathy, and threw himself heartily and childlike into the company of young people whom he loved, and whom he delighted to entertain, as he only could, with the varied and endless anecdotes of his experiences by field and river: and he was always ready to lead a huckleberry-party or a search for chestnuts or grapes. Talking, one day, of a public discourse, Henry remarked that whatever succeeded with the audience was bad. I said, "Who would not like to write something which all can read, like Robinson Crusoe? and who does not see with regret that his page is not solid with a right materialistic treatment, which delights everybody?" Henry objected, of course, and vaunted the better lectures which reached only a few persons. But, at supper, a young girl, understanding that he was to lecture at the Lyceum, sharply asked him, "Whether his lecture would be a nice, interesting story, such as she wished to hear, or whether it was one of those old philosophical things that she did not care about." Henry turned to her, and bethought himself, and, I saw, was trying to believe that he had matter that might fit her

and her brother, who were to sit up and go to the lecture, if it was a good one for them.

He was a speaker and actor of the truth, born such, and was ever running into dramatic situations from this cause. In any circumstance it interested all bystanders to know what part Henry would take, and what he would say; and he did not disappoint expectation, but used an original judgment on each emergency. In 1845 he built himself a small framed house on the shores of Walden Pond, and lived there two years alone, a life of labor and study. This action was quite native and fit for him. No one who knew him would tax him with affectation. He was more unlike his neighbors in his thought than in his action. As soon as he had exhausted the advantages of that solitude, he abandoned it. In 1847, not approving some uses to which the public expenditure was applied, he refused to pay his town tax, and was put in jail. A friend paid the tax for him, and he was released. The like annoyance was threatened the next year. But as his friends paid the tax, notwithstanding his protest, I believe he ceased to resist. No opposition or ridicule had any weight with him. He coldly and fully stated his opinion without affecting to believe that it was the opinion of the company. It was of no consequence if every one present held the opposite opinion. On one occasion he went to the University Library to procure some books. The librarian refused to lend them. Mr. Thoreau repaired to the President, who stated to him the rules and usages, which permitted the loan of books to resident graduates, to clergymen who were alumni, and to some others resident within a circle of ten miles' radius from the College. Mr. Thoreau explained to the President that the railroad had destroyed the old scale of distances,—that the library was useless, yes, and President and College useless, on the terms of his rules,—that the one benefit he owed to the College was its library,—that, at this moment, not only his want of books was imperative, but he wanted a large number of books, and assured him that he, Thoreau and not the librarian, was the proper custodian of these. In short, the President found the petitioner so formidable, and the rules getting to look so ridiculous, that he ended by giving him a privilege which in his hands proved unlimited thereafter.

No truer American existed than Thoreau. His preference of his country and condition was genuine,

and his aversation from English and European manners and tastes almost reached contempt. He listened impatiently to news or *bonmots*<sup>417</sup> gleaned from London circles; and though he tried to be civil, these anecdotes fatigued him. The men were all imitating each other, and on a small mould. Why can they not live as far apart as possible, and each be a man by himself? What he sought was the most energetic nature; and he wished to go to Oregon, not to London. "In every part of Great Britain," he wrote in his diary, "are discovered traces of the Romans, their funereal urns, their camps, their roads, their dwellings. But New England, at least, is not based on any Roman ruins. We have not to lay the foundations of our houses on the ashes of a former civilization."

But idealist as he was, standing for abolition of slavery, abolition of tariffs, almost for abolition of government, it is needless to say he found himself not only unrepresented in actual politics, but almost equally opposed to every class of reformers. Yet he paid the tribute of his uniform respect to the Anti-Slavery party. One man, whose personal acquaintance he had formed, he honored with exceptional regard. Before the first friendly word had been spoken for Captain John Brown, he sent notices to most houses in Concord that he would speak in a public hall on the condition and character of John Brown, on Sunday evening, and invited all people to come. The Republican Committee, the Abolitionist Committee,<sup>30</sup> sent him word that it was premature and not advisable. He replied,—"I did not send to you for advice, but to announce that I am to speak." The hall was filled at an early hour by people of all parties, and his earnest eulogy of the hero was heard by all respectfully, by many with a sympathy that surprised themselves.

It was said of Plotinus that he was ashamed of his body, and 't is very likely he had good reason for it,—that his body was a bad servant, and he had not skill in dealing with the material world, as happens often to men of abstract intellect. But Mr. Thoreau was equipped with a most adapted and serviceable body. He was of short stature, firmly built, of light complexion, with strong, serious blue eyes, and a grave aspect,—his face covered in the late years with a becoming beard. His senses were acute, his frame well-knit and hardy, his hands strong and skilful in

the use of tools. And there was a wonderful fitness of body and mind. He could pace sixteen rods more accurately than another man could measure them with rod and chain. He could find his path in the woods at night, he said, better by his feet than his eyes. He could estimate the measure of a tree very well by his eye; he could estimate the weight of a calf or a pig, like a dealer. From a box containing a bushel or more of loose pencils, he could take up with his hands fast enough just a dozen pencils at every grasp. He was a good swimmer, runner, skater, boatman, and would probably outwalk most countrymen in a day's journey. And the relation of body to mind was still finer than we have indicated. He said he wanted every stride his legs made. The length of his walk uniformly made the length of his writing. If shut up in the house he did not write at all.

He had a strong common sense, like that which Rose Flammock, the weaver's daughter in Scott's romance,<sup>418</sup> commends in her father, as resembling a yardstick, which, whilst it measures dowlas and diaper, can equally well measure tapestry and cloth of gold. He had always a new resource. When I was planting forest trees, and had procured half a peck of acorns, he said that only a small portion of them would be sound, and proceeded to examine them and select the sound ones. But finding this took time, he said, "I think if you put them all into water the good ones will sink;" which experiment we tried with success. He could plan a garden or a house or a barn; would have been competent to lead a "Pacific Exploring Expedition;" could give judicious counsel in the gravest private or public affairs.

He lived for the day, not cumbered and mortified by his memory. If he brought you yesterday a new proposition, he would bring you to-day another not less revolutionary. A very industrious man, and setting, like all highly organized men, a high value on his time, he seemed the only man of leisure in town, always ready for any excursion that promised well, or for conversation prolonged into late hours. His trenchant sense was never stopped by his rules of daily prudence, but was always up to the new occasion. He liked and used the simplest food, yet, when some one urged a vegetable diet. Thoreau thought all diets a very small matter, saying that "the man who shoots the buffalo lives better than the man who boards at the Graham House." He said,—"You can

<sup>417</sup> Witty remarks.

<sup>418</sup> A reference to Scott's *The Betrothed* (1825).

sleep near the railroad, and never be disturbed: Nature knows very well what sounds are worth attending to, and has made up her mind not to hear the railroad-whistle. But things respect the devout mind, and a mental ecstasy was never interrupted." He noted what repeatedly befell him, that, after receiving from a distance a rare plant, he would presently find the same in his own haunts. And those pieces of luck which happen only to good players happened to him. One day, walking with a stranger, 10 who inquired where Indian arrow-heads could be found, he replied, "Everywhere," and stooping forward, picked one on the instant from the ground. At Mount Washington, in Tuckerman's Ravine, Thoreau had a bad fall, and sprained his foot. As he was in the act of getting up from his fall, he saw for the first time the leaves of the *Arnica mollis*.<sup>419</sup>

His robust common sense, armed with stout hands, keen perceptions and strong will, cannot yet account for the superiority which shone in his simple and 20 hidden life. I must add the cardinal fact, that there was an excellent wisdom in him, proper to a rare class of men which showed him the material world as a means and symbol. This discovery, which sometimes yields to poets a certain casual and interrupted light, serving for the ornament of their writing, was in him an unsleeping insight; and whatever faults or obstructions of temperament might cloud it, he was not disobedient to the heavenly vision. In his youth, he said, one day, "The other world is all my art; my 30 pencils will draw no other; my jack-knife will cut nothing else; I do not use it as a means." This was the muse and genius that ruled his opinions, conversation, studies, work and course of life. This made him a searching judge of men. At first glance he measured his companion, and, though insensible to some fine traits of culture, could very well report his weight and calibre. And this made the impression of genius which his conversation sometimes gave.

He understood the matter in hand at a glance, and saw the limitations and poverty of those he talked with, so that nothing seemed concealed from such terrible eyes. I have repeatedly known young men of sensibility converted in a moment to the belief that this was the man they were in search of, the man of men, who could tell them all they should do. His

<sup>419</sup> A species of thistle, the leaves of which were often used as an external domestic remedy for sprains or bruises.

own dealing with them was never affectionate, but superior, didactic, scorning their petty ways,—very slowly conceding, or not conceding at all, the promise of his society at their houses, or even at his own. "Would he not walk with them?" "He did not know. There was nothing so important to him as his walk; he had no walks to throw away on company." Visits were offered him from respectful parties, but he declined them. Admiring friends offered to carry him at their own cost to the Yellowstone River,—to the West Indies,—to South America. But though nothing could be more grave or considered than his refusals, they remind one, in quite new relations, of that fop Brummel's reply to the gentleman who offered him his carriage in a shower, "But where will *you* ride, then?"—and what accusing silences, and what searching and irresistible speeches, battering down all defenses, his companions can remember!

Mr. Thoreau dedicated his genius with such entire 40 love to the fields, hills and waters of his native town, that he made them known and interesting to all reading Americans, and to people over the sea. The river on whose banks he was born and died he knew from its springs to its confluence with the Merrimack. He had made summer and winter observations on it for many years, and at every hour of the day and night. The result of the recent survey of the Water Commissioners appointed by the State of Massachusetts he had reached by his private experiments, several years earlier. Every fact which occurs in the bed, on the banks or in the air over it; the fishes, and their spawning and nests, their manners, their food; the shad-flies which fill the air on a certain evening once a year, and which are snapped at by the fishes so ravenously that many of these die of repletion; the conical heaps of small stones on the river-shallows, the huge nests of small fishes, one of which will sometimes overfill a cart; the birds which frequent the stream, heron, duck, sheldrake, 40 loon, osprey; the snake, muskrat, otter, woodchuck and fox, on the banks; the turtle, frog, hyla and cricket, which make the banks vocal,—were all known to him, and, as it were, townsmen and fellow creatures; so that he felt an absurdity or violence in any narrative of one of these by itself apart, and still more of its dimensions on an inch-rule, or in the exhibition of its skeleton, or the specimen of a squirrel or a bird in brandy. He liked to speak of the manners of the river, as itself a lawful creature, yet

with exactness, and always to an observed fact. As he knew the river, so the ponds in this region.

One of the weapons he used, more important to him than microscope or alcohol-receiver to other investigators, was a whim which grew on him by indulgence, yet appeared in gravest statement, namely, of extolling his own town and neighborhood as the most favored centre for natural observation. He remarked that the Flora of Massachusetts embraced almost all the important plants of America,—most of the oaks, most of the willows, the best pines, the ash, the maple, the beech, the nuts. He returned Kane's Arctic Voyage to a friend of whom he had borrowed it, with the remark, that "Most of the phenomena noted might be observed in Concord." He seemed a little envious of the Pole, for the coincident sunrise and sunset, or five minutes' day after six months: a splendid fact, which Annarsnuc had never afforded him. He found red snow in one of his walks, and told me that he expected to find yet the *Victoria regia* <sup>420</sup> in Concord. He was the attorney of the indigenous plants, and owned to a preference of the weeds to the imported plants, as of the Indian to the civilized man, and noticed, with pleasure, that the willow bean-poles of his neighbor had grown more than his beans. "See these weeds," he said, "which have been hoed at by a million farmers all spring and summer, and yet have prevailed, and just now come out triumphant over all lanes, pastures, fields and gardens, such is their vigor. We have insulted them with low names, too,—as Pigweed, Wormwood, Chickweed, Shad-blossom." He says, "They have brave names, too—Ambrosia, Stellaria, Amelanchier, Amaranth, etc."

I think his fancy for referring everything to the meridian of Concord did not grow out of any ignorance or depreciation of other longitudes or latitudes, but was rather a playful expression of his conviction of the indifference of all places, and that the best place for each is where he stands. He expressed it once in this wise: "I think nothing is to be hoped from you, if this bit of mould under your feet is not sweeter to you to eat than any other in this world, or in any world."

The other weapon with which he conquered all obstacles in science was patience. He knew how to sit immovable, a part of the rock he rested on, until the bird, the reptile, the fish, which had retired from

him, should come back and resume its habits, nay, moved by curiosity, should come to him and watch him.

It was a pleasure and a privilege to walk with him. He knew the country like a fox or a bird, and passed through it as freely by paths of his own. He knew every track in the snow or on the ground, and what creature had taken this path before him. One must submit abjectly to such a guide, and the reward was great. Under his arm he carried an old music-book to press plants; in his pocket, his diary and pencil, a spy-glass for birds, microscope, jack-knife and twine. He wore a straw hat, stout shoes, strong gray trousers, to brave scrub-oaks and smilax, and to climb a tree for a hawk's or a squirrel's nest. He waded into the pool for the waterplants, and his strong legs were no insignificant part of his armor. On the day I speak of he looked for the *Menyanthes*,<sup>421</sup> detected it across the wide pool, and, on examination of the florets, decided that it had been in flower five days. He drew out of his breast-pocket his diary, and read the names of all the plants that should bloom on this day, whereof he kept account as a banker when his notes fall due. The *Cypripedium* <sup>422</sup> not due till to-morrow. He thought that, if waked up from a trance, in this swamp, he could tell by the plants what time of the year it was within two days. The red-start was flying about, and presently the fine grosbeaks, whose brilliant scarlet "makes the rash gazer wipe his eye," and whose fine clear note Thoreau compared to that of a tanager which has got rid of its hoarseness. Presently he heard a note which he called that of the night-warbler, a bird he had never identified, had been in search of twelve years, which always, when he saw it, was in the act of diving down into a tree or bush, and which it was vain to seek; the only bird which sings indifferently by night and by day. I told him he must beware of finding and booking it, lest life should have nothing more to show him. He said, "What you seek in vain for, half your life, one day you come full upon, all the family at dinner. You seek it like a dream, and as soon as you find it you become its prey."

His interest in the flower or the bird lay very deep in his mind, was connected with Nature,—and the meaning of Nature was never attempted to be de-

<sup>421</sup> A genus of bag plants, often called buck bean.

<sup>422</sup> A species of terrestrial orchid, generally called, in America, lady's slippers or moccasin flowers.

<sup>420</sup> The Amazon, giant, or royal, water lily.

finer by him. He would not offer a memoir of his observations to the Natural History Society. "Why should I? To detach the description from its connections in my mind would make it no longer true or valuable to me; and they do not wish what belongs to it." His power of observation seemed to indicate additional senses. He saw as with microscope, heard as with ear-trumpet, and his memory was a photographic register of all he saw and heard. And yet none knew better than he that it is not the fact that imports, but the impression or effect of the fact on your mind. Every fact lay in glory in his mind, a type of the order and beauty of the whole.

His determination on Natural History was organic. He confessed that he sometimes felt like a hound or a panther, and, if born among Indians, would have been a fell hunter. But, restrained by his Massachusetts culture, he played out the game in this mild form of botany and ichthyology. His intimacy with animals suggested what Thomas Fuller records of Butler the apologist, that "either he had told the bees things or the bees had told him." Snakes coiled round his legs; the fishes swam into his hand, and he took them out of the water; he pulled the woodchuck out of its hole by the tail, and took the foxes under his protection from the hunters. Our naturalist had perfect magnanimity; he had no secrets: he would carry you to the heron's haunt, or even to his most prized botanical swamp,—possibly knowing that you could never find it again, yet willing to take his risks.

No college ever offered him a diploma, or a professor's chair; no academy made him its corresponding secretary, its discoverer or even its member. Perhaps these learned bodies feared the satire of his presence. Yet so much knowledge of Nature's secret and genius few others possessed; none in a more large and religious synthesis. For not a particle of respect had he to the opinions of any man or body of men, but homage solely to the truth itself; and as he discovered everywhere among doctors some leaning of courtesy, it discredited them. He grew to be revered and admired by his townsmen, who had at first known him only as an oddity. The farmers who employed him as a surveyor soon discovered his rare accuracy and skill, his knowledge of their lands, of trees, of birds, of Indian remains and the like, which enabled him to tell every farmer more than he knew before of his own farm; so that he began to feel a

little as if Mr. Thoreau had better rights in his land than he. They felt, too, the superiority of character which addressed all men with a native authority.

Indian relics abound in Concord,—arrow-heads, stone chisels, pestles and fragments of pottery; and on the river-bank, large heaps of clam-shells and ashes mark spots which the savages frequented. These, and every circumstance touching the Indian, were important in his eyes. His visits to Maine were chiefly for love of the Indian. He had the satisfaction of seeing the manufacture of the bark canoe, as well as of trying his hand in its management on the rapids. He was inquisitive about the making of the stone arrow-head, and in his last days charged a youth setting out for the Rocky Mountains to find an Indian who could tell him that: "It was well worth a visit to California to learn it." Occasionally, a small party of Penobscot Indians would visit Concord, and pitch their tents for a few weeks in summer on the river-bank. He failed not to make acquaintance with the best of them; though he well knew that asking questions of Indians is like catechizing beavers and rabbits. In his last visit to Maine he had great satisfaction from Joseph Polis, an intelligent Indian of Oldtown, who was his guide for some weeks.

He was equally interested in every natural fact. The depth of his perception found likeness of law throughout Nature, and I know not any genius who so swiftly inferred universal law from the single fact. He was no pedant of a department. His eye was open to beauty, and his ear to music. He found these, not in rare conditions, but wheresoever he went. He thought the best of music was in single strains; and he found poetic suggestion in the humming of the telegraph-wire.

His poetry might be bad or good; he no doubt wanted a lyric facility and technical skill, but he had the source of poetry in his spiritual perception. He was a good reader and critic, and his judgment on poetry was to the ground of it. He could not be deceived as to the presence or absence of the poetic element in any composition, and his thirst for this made him negligent and perhaps scornful of superficial graces. He would pass by many delicate rhythms; but he would have detected every live stanza or line in a volume and knew very well where to find an equal poetic charm in prose. He was so enamoured of the spiritual beauty that he held all actual written poems in very light esteem in the



comparison. He admired Æschylus and Pindar; but when some one was commending them, he said that Æschylus and the Greeks, in describing Apollo and Orpheus, had given no song, or no good one. "They ought not to have moved trees, but to have chanted to the gods such a hymn as would have sung all their old ideas out of their heads, and new ones in." His own verses are often rude and defective. The gold does not yet run pure, is drossy and crude. The thyme and marjoram are not yet honey. But if he 10 want lyric fineness and technical merits, if he have not the poetic temperament, he never lacks the causal thought, showing that his genius was better than his talent. He knew the worth of the Imagination for the uplifting and consolation of human life, and liked to throw every thought into a symbol. The fact you tell is of no value, but only the impression. For this reason his presence was poetic, always piqued the curiosity to know more deeply the secrets of his mind. He had many reserves, an unwillingness to 20 exhibit to profane eyes what was still sacred in his own, and knew well how to throw a poetic veil over his experience. All readers of *Walden* will remember his mythical record of his disappointments:—

"I long ago lost a hound, a bay horse and a turtle-dove, and am still on their trail. Many are the travellers I have spoken concerning them, describing their tracks, and what calls they answered to. I have met one or two who have heard the hound, and the tramp of the horse, and even seen the dove disappear 30 behind a cloud; and they seemed as anxious to recover them as if they had lost them themselves."

His riddles were worth the reading, and I confide that if at any time I do not understand the expression, it is yet just. Such was the wealth of his truth that it was not worth his while to use words in vain. His poem entitled "Sympathy" reveals the tenderness under that triple steel of stoicism, and the intellectual subtlety it could animate. His classic poem on "Smoke" suggests Simonides,<sup>423</sup> but is better than 40 any poem of Simonides. His biography is in his verses. His habitual thought makes all his poetry a hymn to the Cause of causes, the Spirit which vivifies and controls his own:—

"I hearing get, who had but ears,  
And sight, who had but eyes before;  
I moments live, who lived but years,  
And truth discern, who knew but learning's lore."

<sup>423</sup> Simonides (556?–468? B.C.), Greek lyric poet.

And still more in these religious lines:—

"Now chiefly is my natal hour,  
And only now my prime of life;  
I will not doubt the love untold,  
Which not my worth nor want have bought,  
Which wooed me young, and woos me old,  
And to this evening hath me brought."

Whilst he used in his writings a certain petulance of remark in reference to churches or churchmen, he was a person of a rare, tender and absolute religion, a person incapable of any profanation, by act or by thought. Of course, the same isolation which belonged to his original thinking and living detached him from the social religious forms. This is neither to be censured nor regretted. Aristotle long ago explained it, when he said, "One who surpasses his fellow citizens in virtue is no longer a part of the city. Their law is not for him, since he is a law to himself."

Thoreau was sincerity itself, and might fortify the convictions of prophets in the ethical laws by his holy living. It was an affirmative experience which refused to be set aside. A truth-speaker he, capable of the most deep and strict conversation; a physician to the wounds of any soul; a friend, knowing not only the secret of friendship, but almost worshipped by those few persons who resorted to him as their confessor and prophet, and knew the deep value of his mind and great heart. He thought that without religion or devotion of some kind nothing great was ever accomplished: and he thought that the bigoted sectarian had better bear this in mind.

His virtues, of course, sometimes ran into extremes. It was easy to trace to the inexorable demand on all for exact truth that austerity which made this willing hermit more solitary even than he wished. Himself of a perfect probity, he required not less of others. He had a disgust at crime, and no worldly success would cover it. He detected paltering as readily in 45 dignified and prosperous persons as in beggars, and with equal scorn. Such dangerous frankness was in his dealing that his admirers called him "that terrible Thoreau," as if he spoke when silent, and was still present when he had departed. I think the severity of his ideal interfered to deprive him of a healthy sufficiency of human society.

The habit of a realist to find things the reverse of their appearance inclined him to put every statement in a paradox. A certain habit of antagonism defaced



his earlier writings,—a trick of rhetoric not quite outgrown in his later, of substituting for the obvious word and thought its diametrical opposite. He praised wild mountains and winter forests for their domestic air, in snow and ice he would find sultriness, and commended the wilderness for resembling Rome and Paris. "It was so dry, that you might call it wet."

The tendency to magnify the moment, to read all the laws of Nature in the one object or one combination under your eye, is of course comic to those who do not share the philosopher's perception of identity. To him there was no such thing as size. The pond was a small ocean; the Atlantic, a large Walden Pond. He referred every minute fact to cosmical laws. Though he meant to be just, he seemed haunted by a certain chronic assumption that the science of the day pretended completeness, and he had just found out that the *savans*<sup>424</sup> had neglected to discriminate a particular botanical variety, had failed to describe the seeds or count the sepals. "That is to say," we replied, "the blockheads were not born in Concord; but who said they were? It was their unspeakable misfortune to be born in London, or Paris, or Rome; but, poor fellows, they did what they could, considering that they never saw Bateman's Pond, or Nine-Acre Corner, or Becky Stow's Swamp; besides, what were you sent into the world for, but to add this observation?"

Had his genius been only contemplative, he had been fitted to his life, but with his energy and practical ability he seemed born for great enterprise and for command; and I so much regret the loss of his rare powers of action, that I cannot help counting it a fault in him that he had no ambition. Wanting this, instead of engineering for all America, he was the captain of a huckleberry-party. Pounding beans is good to the end of pounding empires one of these days; but if, at the end of years, it is still only beans!

But these foibles, real or apparent, were fast vanishing in the incessant growth of a spirit so robust and wise, and which effaced its defeats with new triumphs. His study of Nature was a perpetual ornament to him, and inspired his friends with curiosity to see the world through his eyes, and to hear his adventures. They possessed every kind of interest.

He had many elegancies of his own, while he scoffed at conventional elegance. Thus, he could not bear to hear the sound of his own steps, the grit of

gravel; and therefore never willingly walked in the road, but in the grass, on mountains and in woods. His senses were acute, and he remarked that by night every dwelling-house gives out bad air, like a slaughter-house. He liked the pure fragrance of melilot. He honored certain plants with special regard, and, over all, the pond-lily,—then, the gentian and the *Mikania scandens*,<sup>425</sup> and "life-everlasting," and a bass-tree which he visited every year when it bloomed, in the middle of July. He thought the scent a more oracular inquisition than the sight,—more oracular and trustworthy. The scent, of course, reveals what is concealed from the other senses. By it he detected earthiness. He delighted in echoes, and said they were almost the only kind of kindred voices that he heard. He loved Nature so well, was so happy in her solitude, that he became very jealous of cities and the sad work which their refinements and artifices made with man and his dwelling. The axe was always destroying his forest. "Thank God," he said, "they cannot cut down the clouds!" "All kinds of figures are drawn on the blue ground with this fibrous white paint."

I subjoin a few sentences taken from his unpublished manuscripts, not only as records of his thought and feeling, but for their power of description and literary excellence:—

"Some circumstantial evidence is very strong, as when you find a trout in the milk."

"The chub is a soft fish, and tastes like boiled brown paper salted."

"The youth gets together his materials to build a bridge to the moon, or, perchance, a palace or temple on the earth, and, at length the middle-aged man concludes to build a wood-shed with them."

"The locust z-ing."

"Devil's-needles zigzagging along the Nut-Meadow brook."

"Sugar is not so sweet to the palate as sound to the healthy ear."

"I put on some hemlock-boughs, and the rich salt crackling of their leaves was like mustard to the ear, the crackling of uncountable regiments. Dead trees love the fire."

"The bluebird carries the sky on his back."

"The tanager flies through the green foliage as if it would ignite the leaves."

"If I wish for a horse-hair for my compass-sight I

<sup>424</sup> Men of learning, specialists.

<sup>425</sup> Climbing hemp weed.

must go to the stable; but the hair-bird, with her sharp eyes, goes to the road."

"Immortal water, alive even to the superficies."

"Fire is the most tolerable third party."

"Nature made ferns for pure leaves, to show what she could do in that line."

"No tree has so fair a bole and so handsome an instep as the beech."

"How did these beautiful rainbow-tints get into the shell of the fresh-water clam, buried in the mud at the bottom of our dark river?"

"Hard are the times when the infant's shoes are second-foot."

"We are strictly confined to our men to whom we give liberty."

"Nothing is so much to be feared as fear. Atheism may comparatively be popular with God himself."

"Of what significance the things you can forget? A little thought is sexton to all the world."

"How can we expect a harvest of thought who have not had a seed-time of character?"

"Only he can be trusted with gifts who can present a face of bronze to expectations."

"I ask to be melted. You can only ask of the metals that they be tender to the fire that melts them. To nought else can they be tender."

There is a flower known to botanists, one of the

same genus with our summer plant called "Life-Everlasting," a *Gnaphalium* like that, which grows on the most inaccessible cliffs of the Tyrolean mountains, where the chamois dare hardly venture, and which the hunter, tempted by its beauty, and by his love (for it is immensely valued by the Swiss maidens), climbs the cliffs to gather, and is sometimes found dead at the foot, with the flower in his hand. It is called by botanists the *Gnaphalium leontopodium*, but by the Swiss *Edelweisse*, which signifies *Noble Purity*. Thoreau seemed to me living in the hope to gather this plant, which belonged to him of right. The scale on which his studies proceeded was so large as to require longevity, and we were the less prepared for his sudden disappearance. The country knows not yet, or in the least part, how great a son it has lost. It seems an injury that he should leave in the midst his broken task which none else can finish, a kind of indignity to so noble a soul that he should depart out of Nature before yet he has been really shown to his peers for what he is. But he, at least, is content. His soul was made for the noblest society; he had in a short life exhausted the capabilities of this world; wherever there is knowledge, wherever there is virtue, wherever there is beauty, he will find a home.

1862

### Brook Farm

The West Roxbury Association was formed in 1841, by a society of members, men and women, who bought a farm in West Roxbury, of about two hundred acres, and took possession of the place in April. Mr. George Ripley was the President, and I think Mr. Charles Dana (afterwards well known as one of the editors of the New York Tribune) was the Secretary. Many members took shares by paying money, others held shares by their labor. An old house on the place was enlarged, and three new houses built. William Allen was at first and for some time the head farmer, and the work was distributed in orderly committees to the men and women. There were many employments more or less lucrative found for, or brought hither by these members,—shoemakers, joiners, sempstresses. They had good scholars among them, and so received pupils for their education. The parents of the children in some instances

wished to live there, and were received as boarders. Many persons, attracted by the beauty of the place and the culture and ambition of the community, joined them as boarders, and lived there for years. I think the numbers of this mixed community soon reached eighty or ninety souls.

It was a noble and generous movement in the projectors, to try an experiment of better living. They had the feeling that our ways of living were too conventional and expensive, not allowing each to do what he had a talent for, and not permitting men to combine cultivation of mind and heart with a reasonable amount of daily labor. At the same time, it was an attempt to lift others with themselves, and to share the advantages they should attain, with others now deprived of them.

There was no doubt great variety of character and purpose in the members of the community. It con-

sisted in the main of young people,—few of middle age, and none old. Those who inspired and organized it were of course persons impatient of the routine, the uniformity, perhaps they would say the squalid contentment of society around them, which was so timid and skeptical of any progress. One would say then that impulse was the rule in the society, without centripetal balance; perhaps it would not be severe to say, intellectual sans-culottism, an impatience of the formal, routinary character of our educational, religious, social and economical life in Massachusetts. Yet there was immense hope in these young people. There was nobleness; there were self-sacrificing victims who compensated for the levity and rashness of their companions. The young people lived a great deal in a short time, and came forth some of them perhaps with shattered constitutions. And a few grave sanitary influences of character were happily there, which I was assured, were always felt.

George W. Curtis of New York, and his brother, 20 of English Oxford, were members of the family from the first. Theodore Parker, the near neighbor of the farm and the most intimate friend of Mr. Ripley, was a frequent visitor. Mr. Ichabod Morton of Plymouth, a plain man formerly engaged through many years in the fisheries with success, eccentric,—with a persevering interest in education, and of a very democratic religion, came and built a house on the farm, and he, or members of his family, continued there to the end. Margaret Fuller, with her 30 joyful conversation and large sympathy, was often a guest, and always in correspondence with her friends. Many ladies, whom to name were to praise, gave character and varied attraction to the place.

In and around Brook Farm, whether as members, boarders or visitors, were many remarkable persons, for character, intellect or accomplishments. I recall one youth of the subtlest mind. I believe I must say the subtlest observer and diviner of character I ever met, living, reading, writing, talking there, perhaps 40 as long as the colony held together; his mind fed and over-fed by whatever is exalted in genius, whether in Poetry or Art, in Drama or Music, or in social accomplishment and elegance; a man of no employment or practical aims, a student and philosopher, who found his daily enjoyment not with the elders or his exact contemporaries so much as with the fine boys who were skating and playing ball or bird-hunting; forming the closest friendships with such, and finding his

delight in the petulant heroism of boys; yet was he the chosen counsellor to whom the guardians would repair on any hitch or difficulty that occurred, and draw from him a wise counsel. A fine, subtle, inward genius, puny in body and habit as a girl, yet with an *aplomb* <sup>426</sup> like a general, never disconcerted. He lived and thought, in 1842, such worlds of life; all hinging on the thought of Being or Reality as opposed to consciousness; hating intellect with the ferocity of a Swedenborg. He was the Abbé or spiritual father, from his religious bias. His reading lay in Æschylus, Plato, Dante, Calderon, Shakspeare, and in modern novels and romances of merit. There too was Hawthorne, with his cold yet gentle genius, if he failed to do justice to this temporary home. There was the accomplished Doctor of Music, who has presided over its literature ever since in our metropolis. Rev. William Henry Channing, now of London, was from the first a student of Socialism in France and England, and in perfect sympathy with this experiment. An English baronet, Sir John Caldwell, was a frequent visitor, and more or less directly interested in the leaders and the success.

Hawthorne drew some sketches, not happily, as I think; I should rather say, quite unworthy of his genius. No friend who knew Margaret Fuller could recognize her rich and brilliant genius under the dismal mask which the public fancied was meant for her in that disagreeable story.

The Founders of Brook Farm should have this praise, that they made what all people try to make, an agreeable place to live in. All comers, even the most fastidious, found it the pleasantest of residences. It is certain that freedom from household routine, variety of character and talent, variety of work, variety of means of thought and instruction, art, music, poetry, reading, masquerade, did not permit sluggishness or despondency; broke up routine. There is agreement in the testimony that it was, to most 40 of the associates, education; to many, the most important period of their life, the birth of valued friendships, their first acquaintance with the riches of conversation, their training in behavior. The art of letter-writing, it is said, was immensely cultivated. Letters were always flying not only from house to house, but from room to room. It was a perpetual picnic, a French Revolution in small, an Age of Reason in a patty-pan.

<sup>426</sup> Self-assurance, poise.

In the American social communities, the gossip found such vent and sway as to become despotic. The institutions were whispering-galleries, in which the adored Saxon privacy was lost. Married women I believe uniformly decided against the community. It was to them like the brassy and lacquered life in hotels. The common school was well enough, but to the common nursery they had grave objections. Eggs might be hatched in ovens, but the hen on her own account much preferred the old way. A hen without 10 her chickens was but half a hen.

It was a curious experience of the patrons and leaders of this noted community, in which the agreement with many parties was that they should give so many hours of instruction in mathematics, in music, in moral and intellectual philosophy, and so forth,—that in every instance the newcomers showed themselves keenly alive to the advantages of the society, and were sure to avail themselves of every means of instruction; their knowledge was increased, their 20 manners refined,—but they became in that proportion averse to labor, and were charged by the heads of the departments with a certain indolence and selfishness.

In practice it is always found that virtue is occasional, spotty, and not linear or cubic. Good people are as bad as rogues if steady performance is claimed; the conscience of the conscientious runs in veins, and the most punctilious in some particulars are latitudinarian in others. It was very gently said that 30 people on whom beforehand all persons would put the utmost reliance were not responsible. They saw the necessity that the work must be done, and did it not, and it of course fell to be done by the few religious workers. No doubt there was in many a certain strength drawn from the fury of dissent. Thus Mr. Ripley told Theodore Parker, "There is your accomplished friend —: he would hoe corn all Sunday if I would let him, but all Massachusetts could not make him do it on Monday."

Of course every visitor found that there was a comic side to this Paradise of shepherds and shepherdesses. There was a stove in every chamber, and every one might burn as much wood as he or she would saw. The ladies took cold on washing-day; so it was ordained that the gentlemen shepherds should wring and hang out clothes; which they punctually did. And it would sometimes occur that when they danced in the evening, clothespins dropped plenti-

fully from their pockets. The country members naturally were surprised to observe that one man ploughed all day and one looked out of the window all day, and perhaps drew his picture, and both received at night the same wages. One would meet also some modest pride in their advanced condition, signified by a frequent phrase, "Before we came out of civilization."

The question which occurs to you had occurred much earlier to Fourier: "How in this charming Elysium is the dirty work to be done?" And long ago Fourier had exclaimed, "Ah! I have it," and jumped with joy. "Don't you see," he cried, "that nothing so delights the young Caucasian child as dirt? See the mud-pies that all children will make if you will let them. See how much more joy they find in pouring their pudding on the table-cloth than into their beautiful mouths. The children from six to eight, organized into companies with flags and uniforms, shall 20 do this last function of civilization."

In Brook Farm was this peculiarity, that there was no head. In every family is the father; in every factory, a foreman; in a shop, a master; in a boat, the skipper; but in this Farm, no authority; each was master or mistress of his or her actions; happy, hapless anarchists. They expressed, after much perilous experience, the conviction that plain dealing was the best defence of manners and moral between the sexes. People cannot live together in any but necessary 30 ways. The only candidates who will present themselves will be those who have tried the experiment of independence and ambition, and have failed; and none others will barter for the most comfortable equality the chance of superiority. Then all communities have quarreled. Few people can live together on their merits. There must be kindred, or mutual economy, or a common interest in their business, or other external tie.

The society at Brook Farm existed, I think, about 40 six or seven years, and then broke up, the Farm was sold, and I believe all the partners came out with pecuniary loss. Some of them had spent on it the accumulations of years. I suppose they all, at the moment, regarded it as a failure. I do not think they can so regard it now, but probably as an important chapter in their experience which has been of lifelong value. What knowledge of themselves and of each other, what various practical wisdom, what personal power, what studies of character, what accumulated

culture many of the members owed to it! What mutual measure they took of each other! It was a close union, like that in a ship's cabin, of clergymen, young collegians, merchants, mechanics, farmers' sons and daughters, with men and women of rare opportunities and delicate culture, yet assembled there by a sentiment which all shared, some of them hotly shared, of the honesty of a life of labor and of the beauty of a life of humanity. The yeoman saw refined manners in persons who were his friends; and the lady or the romantic scholar saw the continuous strength and faculty in people who would have disgusted them but that these powers were now spent in the direction of their own theory of life.

I recall these few selected facts, none of them of

much independent interest, but symptomatic of the times and country. I please myself with the thought that our American mind is not now eccentric or rude in its strength, but is beginning to show a quiet power, drawn from wide and abundant sources, proper to a Continent and to an educated people. If I have owed much to the special influences I have indicated, I am not less aware of that excellent and increasing circle of masters in arts and in song and in science, who cheer the intellect of our cities and this country to-day,—whose genius is not a lucky accident, but normal, and with broad foundation of culture, and so inspires the hope of steady strength advancing on itself, and a day without night.

c. 1867

1883

### *Good-bye* <sup>427</sup>

Good-bye, proud world! I'm going home:  
Thou art not my friend, and I'm not thine.  
Long through thy weary crowds I roam;  
A river-ark on the ocean brine,  
Long I've been tossed like the driven foam;  
But now, proud world! I'm going home.

Good-bye to Flattery's fawning face;  
To Grandeur with his wise grimace;  
To upstart Wealth's averted eye;  
To supple Office, low and high;  
To crowded halls, to court and street;  
To frozen hearts and hasting feet;  
To those who go, and those who come;  
Good-bye, proud world! I'm going home.

I am going to my own hearth-stone,  
Bosomed in yon green hills alone,—  
A secret nook in a pleasant land,  
Whose groves the frolic fairies planned;  
Where arches green, the livelong day,  
Echo the blackbird's roundelay,  
And vulgar feet have never trod  
A spot that is sacred to thought and God.

20

O, when I am safe in my sylvan home,<sup>428</sup>  
I tread on the pride of Greece and Rome;  
And when I am stretched beneath the pines,  
Where the evening star so holy shines,  
I laugh at the lore and the pride of man,  
At the sophist schools and the learned clan;  
For what are they all, in their high conceit,  
When man in the bush with God may meet?  
1823 1839

### *Thought* <sup>429</sup>

10 I am not poor, but I am proud,  
Of one inalienable right,  
Above the envy of the crowd,—  
Thought's holy light.  
Better it is than gems or gold,  
And oh! it cannot die,  
But thought will glow when the sun grows cold,  
And mix with Deity.  
1823 1903

### *Written at Rome*

Alone in Rome. Why, Rome is lonely too;—  
Besides, you need not be alone; the soul

<sup>427</sup> As Professor Norman Foerster has observed (*Nature in American Literature*, 43), this early poem of Emerson's contains virtually everything that characterizes his poetry of nature: (1) his preference of solitude to society, (2) his self-reliant rejection of tradition and authority, (3) his confidence in revelation here and now, (4) his feeling that in nature, rightly studied,

man may come to know what spirit is, and (5) the very setting itself of simple nature, with its pines and evening star.

<sup>428</sup> The "sylvan home" refers to his mother's residence in Roxbury, whither Emerson went when the school term was over.

<sup>429</sup> An early expression of Emerson's deification of moralized thought.

Shall have society of its own rank.  
 Be great, be true, and all the Scipios,  
 The Catos, the wise patriots of Rome,  
 Shall flock to you and tarry by your side,  
 And comfort you with their high company.  
 Virtue alone is sweet society,  
 It keeps the key to all heroic hearts,  
 And opens you a welcome in them all.  
 You must be like them if you desire them,  
 Scorn trifles and embrace a better aim  
 Than wine or sleep or praise;  
 Hunt knowledge as the lover wooes a maid,  
 And ever in the strife of your own thoughts  
 Obey the nobler impulse; that is Rome:  
 That shall command a senate to your side;  
 For there is no might in the universe  
 That can contend with love. It reigns forever.  
 Wait then, sad friend, wait in majestic peace  
 The hour of heaven. Generously trust  
 Thy fortune's web to the beneficent hand  
 That until now has put his world in fee  
 To thee. He watches for thee still. His love  
 Broods over thee, and as God lives in heaven,  
 However long thou walkest solitary  
 The hour of heaven shall come, the man appear.  
 1833 1884

### *Written in Naples*

We are what we are made; each following day  
 Is the Creator of our human mould  
 Not less than was the first; the all-wise God  
 Gilds a few points in every several life,  
 And as each flower upon the fresh hillside,  
 And every colored petal of each flower,  
 Is sketched and dyed, each with a new design,  
 In spot of purple, and its streak of brown,  
 So each man's life shall have its proper light,  
 And a few joys, a few peculiar charms,  
 For him round in the melancholy hours  
 And reconcile him to the common days.  
 Not many men see beauty in the fogs  
 Of close low pinewoods in a river town;  
 Yet unto me not morn's magnificence,  
 Nor the red rainbow of a summer eve,  
 Nor Rome, nor joyful Paris, nor the halls  
 Of rich men blazing hospitable light,

<sup>430</sup> Like Bryant in "The Yellow Violet" and "The Fringed Gentian," Emerson writes about a typical American flower rather than the hackneyed lilies or myrtles of conventional poetry.

Nor wit, nor eloquence,—no, nor even the song  
 Of any woman that is now alive.—  
 Hath such a soul, such divine influence,  
 Such resurrection of the happy past.  
 As is to me when I behold the morn  
 Ope in such low moist roadside, and beneath  
 Peep the blue violets out of the black loam,  
 Pathetic silent poets that sing to me  
 Thine elegy, sweet singer, sainted wife.  
 1833 1883

### *The Rhodora.* <sup>430</sup>

#### ON BEING ASKED, WHENCE IS THE FLOWER?

In May, when sea-winds pierced our solitudes,  
 I found the fresh Rhodora in the woods,  
 Spreading its leafless blooms in a damp nook,  
 To please the desert and the sluggish brook.  
 The purple petals, fallen in the pool,  
 Made the black water with their beauty gay;  
 Here might the red-bird come his plumes to cool,  
 And court the flower that cheapens his array.  
 Rhodora! if the sages ask thee why  
 This charm is wasted on the earth and sky,  
 Tell them, dear, that if eyes were made for seeing,  
 Then Beauty is its own excuse for being:  
 Why thou wert there, O rival of the rose!  
 I never thought to ask, I never knew:  
 But, in my simple ignorance, suppose  
 The self-same Power that brought me there  
 brought you.  
 1834 1839

### *The Apology* <sup>431</sup>

Think me not unkind and rude  
 That I walk alone in grove and glen;  
 I go to the god of the wood  
 To fetch his word to men.  
 Tax not my sloth that I  
 Fold my arms beside the brook;  
 Each cloud that floated in the sky  
 Writes a letter in my book.  
 Chide me not, laborious band,  
 For the idle flowers I brought;  
 Every aster in my hand  
 Goes home loaded with a thought.

<sup>431</sup> Like Wordsworth in "Expostulation and Reply" and "The Tables Turned," Emerson finds the teachings of nature superior to the lore of books and learned men.

There was never mystery  
 But 't is figured in the flowers;  
 Was never secret history  
 But birds tell it in the bowers.

One harvest from thy field  
 Homeward brought the oxen strong;  
 A second crop thine acres yield  
 Which I gather in a song.

1834

1847

### *Each and All* <sup>432</sup>

Little thinks, in the field, yon red-cloaked clown  
 Of thee from the hill-top looking down;  
 The heifer that lows in the upland farm,  
 Far-heard, lows not thine ear to charm;  
 The sexton, tolling his bell at noon,  
 Deems not that great Napoleon  
 Stops his horse, and lists with delight,  
 Whilst his files sweep round yon Alpine height;  
 Nor knowest thou what argument  
 Thy life to thy neighbor's creed has lent.  
 All are needed by each one;  
 Nothing is fair or good alone.

10

I thought the sparrow's note from heaven,  
 Singing at dawn on the alder bough;  
 I brought him home, in his nest, at even;  
 He sings the song, but it cheers not now.  
 For I did not bring home the river and sky;—  
 He sang to my ear,—they sang to my eye.<sup>433</sup>  
 The delicate shells lay on the shore;  
 The bubbles of the latest wave  
 Fresh pearls to their enamel gave,  
 And the bellowing of the savage sea  
 Greeted their safe escape to me.  
 I wiped away the weeds and foam,  
 I fetched my sea-born treasures home;  
 But the poor, unsightly, noisome things  
 Had left their beauty on the shore  
 With the sun and the sand and the wild uproar.  
 The lover watched his graceful maid,  
 As 'mid the virgin train she strayed,  
 Nor knew her beauty's best attire

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30

Was woven still by the snow-white choir.  
 At last she came to his hermitage,  
 Like the bird from the woodlands to the cage;—  
 The gay enchantment was undone,  
 A gentle wife, but fairy none.  
 Then I said, "I covet truth;  
 Beauty is unripe childhood's cheat;  
 I leave it behind with the games of youth:"—

20

40

As I spoke, beneath my feet  
 The ground-pine curled its pretty wreath,  
 Running over the club-moss burrs;  
 I inhaled the violet's breath;  
 Around me stood the oaks and firs;  
 Pine-cones and acorns lay on the ground;  
 Over me soared the eternal sky,  
 Full of light and of deity;  
 Again I saw, again I heard,  
 The rolling river, the morning bird;—  
 Beauty through my senses stole;  
 I yielded myself to the perfect whole.

1834 (?)

1839

### *Concord Hymn*

SUNG AT THE COMPLETION

OF THE BATTLE MONUMENT, JULY 4, 1837

By the rude bridge that arched the flood,  
 Their flag to April's breeze unfurled,  
 Here once the embattled farmers stood  
 And fired the shot heard round the world.<sup>434</sup>

The foe long since in silence slept;  
 Alike the conqueror silent sleeps;  
 And Time the ruined bridge has swept  
 Down the dark stream which seaward creeps.

On this green bank, by this soft stream,  
 We set to-day a votive stone;  
 That memory may their deed redeem,  
 When, like our sires, our sons are gone.

10

Spirit, that made those heroes dare  
 To die, and leave their children free,  
 Bid Time and Nature gently spare  
 The shaft we raise to them and thee.

1836 (?)

1837

beauty of individual forms . . ." See also the passage in *Nature*, chap. iii: "Nothing is quite beautiful alone; nothing but is beautiful in the whole. A single object is only so far beautiful as it suggests this universal grace."

<sup>433</sup> Emerson once said, "I think sometimes that my lack of musical ear is made good to me through my eyes; that which others hear I see."

<sup>434</sup> The battles of Lexington and Concord began on April 19, 1775.

<sup>432</sup> A poetic expression of the philosophic problem of unity and variety, or the one and the many, this poem appears to have had its suggestion in such an experience as the following, recorded in the *Journals* for May 16, 1834: "I remember when I was a boy going upon the beach and being charmed with the colors and forms of the shells. I picked up many and put them in my pocket. When I got home I could find nothing that I gathered—nothing but some dry, ugly mussel and snail shells. Thence I learned that Composition was more important than the

*The Humble-Bee*<sup>435</sup>

Burly, dozing humble-bee,  
Where thou art is clime for me.  
Let them sail for Porto Rique,  
Far-off heats through seas to seek;  
I will follow thee alone,  
Thou animated torrid-zone!  
Zigzag steerer, desert cheerer,  
Let me chase thy waving lines;  
Keep me nearer, me thy hearer,  
Singing over shrubs and vines.

Insect lover of the sun,  
Joy of thy dominion!  
Sailor of the atmosphere;  
Swimmer through the waves of air;  
Voyager of light and noon;  
Epicurean of June;  
Wait, I prithee, till I come  
Within earshot of thy hum,—  
All without is martyrdom.

When the south wind, in May days,  
With a net of shining haze  
Silters the horizon wall,  
And with softness touching all,  
Tints the human countenance  
With a color of romance,  
And infusing subtle heats,  
Turns the sod to violets,  
Thou, in sunny solitudes,  
Rover of the underwoods,  
The green silence dost displace  
With thy mellow, breezy bass.

Hot midsummer's petted crone,  
Sweet to me thy drowsy tone  
Tells of countless sunny hours,  
Long days, and solid banks of flowers;  
Of gulfs of sweetness without bound

In Indian wildernesses found;  
Of Syrian peace, immortal leisure,  
Firmest cheer, and bird-like pleasure.  
Aught unsavory or unclean  
Hath my insect never seen;  
But violets and bilberry bells,  
Maple-sap and daffodils,  
Grass with green flag half-mast high,  
Succory to match the sky,  
Columbine with horn of honey,  
Scented fern, and agrimony,  
Clover, catchfly, adder's-tongue  
And brier-roses, dwelt among;  
All beside was unknown waste,  
All was picture as he passed.

Wiser far than human seer,  
Yellow-breeched philosopher!  
Seeing only what is fair,  
Sipping only what is sweet,  
Thou dost mock at fate and care,  
Leave the chaff, and take the wheat.  
When the fierce northwestern blast  
Cools sea and land so far and fast,  
Thou already slumberest deep;  
Woe and want thou canst outsleep;  
Want and woe, which torture us,  
Thy sleep makes ridiculous.  
1837

*Uriel*<sup>436</sup>

It fell in the ancient periods  
Which the brooding soul surveys,  
Or ever the wild Time coined itself  
Into calendar months and days.

This was the lapse of Uriel,  
Which in Paradise befell.

<sup>435</sup> In his *Journals* for May 9, 1837, Emerson wrote: "Yesterday in the woods I followed the fine humble-bee with rhymes and fancies fine." On the next page he wrote, "The humble-bee and pine-warbler seem to me the proper objects of attention in these disastrous times."

<sup>436</sup> In his *Journals* Emerson wrote on May 10, 1840, "Beware when the great God lets loose a thinker on this planet." His letters and journals, then and earlier, demonstrate his belief that religion owed a great deal to Copernicus as emancipating religion from "the pagan fictions of the Church by showing mankind that the earth is not the center of the universe . . . but a little scrap of a planet, rushing round the sun . . . which in turn was too minute to be seen at the distance of many stars

which we behold." The fable of this poem illustrates how a new truth put into circulation by Uriel (Milton's bright Archangel of the Sun) shocked the established gods. The poem should be read in the light of Emerson's Divinity School Address of 1838, in which he attacked the traditionalism of established Christianity while defending the doctrine of immanence in terms of a depersonalized deity of animated law. Thus the poem may be read as a generalized and sublimated account of the Divinity School Address and its after-effects—the announcement of an advance in truth, won not without pain to the announcer or without struggle to the hearers who are not yet ready for the new truth. The result is the banishment of the prophet; yet the word spoken sticks like a barbed arrow and works like a leaven, while the upholders of sterile tradition sit helpless and tremble.



Once, among the Pleiads <sup>437</sup> walking,  
 Seyd <sup>438</sup> overheard the young gods talking;  
 And the treason, too long pent,  
 To his ears was evident.

The young deities discussed  
 Laws of form, and metre just,  
 Orb, quintessence, and sunbeams,  
 What subsisteth, and what seems.  
 One, with low tones that decide,  
 And doubt and reverend use defied,  
 With a look that solved the sphere,  
 And stirred the devils everywhere,  
 Gave his sentiment divine  
 Against the being of a line.  
 "Line in nature is not found;  
 Unit and universe are round;  
 In vain produced, all rays return;  
 Evil will bless, and ice will burn."  
 As Uriel spoke with piercing eye,  
 A shudder ran around the sky;  
 The stern old war-gods shook their heads,  
 The seraphs frowned from myrtle-beds;  
 Seemed to the holy festival  
 The rash word boded ill to all;  
 The balance-beam of Fate was bent;  
 The bounds of good and ill were rent;  
 Strong Hades could not keep his own,  
 But all slid to confusion.

A sad self-knowledge, withering, fell  
 On the beauty of Uriel;  
 In heaven once eminent, the god  
 Withdrew, that hour, into his cloud;  
 Whether doomed to long gyration  
 In the sea of generation,  
 Or by knowledge grown too bright  
 To hit the nerve of feebler sight.  
 Straightway, a forgetting wind  
 Stole over the celestial kind,

<sup>437</sup> The seven daughters of Atlas, transformed into a group of stars so named; a conspicuous loose cluster of stars in the constellation of Taurus.

<sup>438</sup> Seyd or Saadi (1184?-1291), Emerson's names for the ideal poet, a Persian, whose works (in translation) Emerson admired.

<sup>439</sup> This poem, originally called "The Priest," appears to have proceeded from feelings like those recorded in the *Journals* for August 28, 1838: "It is very grateful to my feelings to go into a Roman Cathedral, yet I look as my countrymen do at the Roman priesthood. It is very grateful to me to go into an English Church and hear the liturgy read, yet nothing would induce me to be an English priest. I find an unpleasant dilemma in this, nearer home. I dislike to be a clergyman and refuse to

And their lips the secret kept,  
 If in ashes the fire-seed slept.

10 But now and then, truth-speaking things  
 Shamed the angels' veiling wings;  
 And, shrilling from the solar course,  
 Or from fruit of chemic force,  
 Procession of a soul in matter,  
 Or the speeding change of water,  
 Or out of the good of evil born,  
 Came Uriel's voice of cherub scorn,  
 And a blush tinged the upper sky,  
 And the gods shook, they knew not why.  
 c. 1838

50

1847

### *The Problem* <sup>439</sup>

I like a church; I like a cowl;  
 I love a prophet of the soul;  
 And on my heart monastic aisles  
 Fall like sweet strains, or pensive smiles;  
 Yet not for all his faith can see  
 Would I that cowl'd churchman be.

30 Why should the vest on him allure,  
 Which I could not on me endure?

Not from a vain or shallow thought  
 His awful Jove young Phidias brought; <sup>440</sup>  
 Never from lips of cunning fell  
 The thrilling Delphic oracle; <sup>441</sup>  
 Out from the heart of nature rolled  
 The burdens of the Bible old;  
 The litanies of nations came,  
 Like the volcano's tongue of flame,  
 Up from the burning core below,—  
 40 The canticles of love and woe:  
 The hand that rounded Peter's dome <sup>442</sup>  
 And groined <sup>443</sup> the aisles of Christian Rome  
 Wrought in a sad sincerity;

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be one. Yet how rich a music would be to me a holy clergyman in my town. It seems to me he cannot be a man, quite and whole; yet how plain is the need of one, and how high, yes, highest is the function. Here is a division of labor that I like not: a man must sacrifice his manhood for the social good. Something is wrong; I see not what."

<sup>440</sup> The references are to a famous statue of Jove (Zeus) at Athens which has disappeared. Phidias was the most famous Greek sculptor.

<sup>441</sup> The most famous of the oracles in Greece, known as the oracle of Apollo.

<sup>442</sup> The dome of St. Peter's in Rome was completed by Michelangelo.

<sup>443</sup> The groin is the angular curve formed by the crossing of two Gothic arches.

Himself from God he could not free;  
He builded better than he knew;—  
The conscious stone to beauty grew.

Know'st thou what wove yon woodbird's nest  
Of leaves, and feathers from her breast?  
Or how the fish outbuilt her shell,  
Painting with morn each annual cell?  
Or how the sacred pine-tree adds  
To her old leaves new myriads?  
Such and so grew these holy piles,  
Whilst love and terror laid the tiles.

Earth proudly wears the Parthenon,<sup>444</sup>  
As the best gem upon her zone,  
And Morning opens with haste her lids  
To gaze upon the Pyramids;  
O'er England's abbeys bends the sky,  
As on its friends, with kindred eye;  
For out of Thought's interior sphere  
These wonders rose to upper air;  
And Nature gladly gave them place,  
Adopted them into her race,  
And granted them an equal date  
With Andes and with Ararat.<sup>445</sup>

These temples grew as grows the grass;  
Art might obey, but not surpass.  
The passive Master lent his hand  
To the vast soul that o'er him planned;  
And the same power that reared the shrine  
Bestrode the tribes that knelt within.  
Ever the fiery Pentecost<sup>446</sup>  
Girds with one flame the countless host,  
Trances the heart through chanting choirs,  
And through the priest the mind inspires.  
The word unto the prophet spoken  
Was writ on tables yet unbroken;<sup>447</sup>  
The word by seers or sibyls<sup>448</sup> told,  
In groves of oak, or fancies of gold,  
Still floats upon the morning wind,  
Still whispers to the willing mind.  
One accent of the Holy Ghost  
The heedless world hath never lost.  
I know what say the fathers wise,—

<sup>444</sup> The Parthenon in Athens, considered the finest example of Greek architecture.

<sup>445</sup> The Andes in the new world and Mt. Ararat in Asia are mentioned as examples of natural antiquity.

<sup>446</sup> See Acts 2; fifteenth day after the Passover and the Crucifixion.

<sup>447</sup> See Exodus 32:19, 34. The prophet is Moses.

<sup>448</sup> Prophetesses.

The Book itself before me lies,  
Old *Chrysostom*,<sup>449</sup> best Augustine,<sup>450</sup>  
And he who blent both in his line,  
The younger *Golden Lips* or mines,  
Taylor,<sup>451</sup> the Shakspeare of divines,  
His words are music in my ear,  
I see his cowlèd portrait dear;  
And yet, for all his faith could see,  
I would not the good bishop be.  
1839

70

1840

### Woodnotes—I<sup>452</sup>

1

When the pine tosses its cones  
To the song of its waterfall tones,  
Who speeds to the woodland walks?  
To birds and trees who talks?  
Cæsar of his leafy Rome,  
There the poet is at home.  
He goes to the river-side,—  
Not hook nor line hath he;  
He stands in the meadows wide,—  
Nor gun nor scythe to see.  
Sure some god his eye enchants:  
What he knows nobody wants.  
In the wood he travels glad,  
Without better fortune had,  
Melancholy without bad.  
Knowledge this man prizes best  
Seems fantastic to the rest:  
Pondering shadows, colors, clouds,  
Grass-buds and caterpillar-shrouds,  
Boughs on which the wild bees settle,  
Tints that spot the violet's petal,  
Why Nature loves the number five,  
And why the star-form she repeats:  
Lover of all things alive,  
Wonderer at all he meets,  
Wonderer chiefly at himself,  
Who can tell him what he is?

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<sup>449</sup> John, of Antioch (347-407), known as Chrysostom, or the Golden Mouth, because of his eloquence.

<sup>450</sup> St. Augustine (354-430).

<sup>451</sup> Jeremy Taylor (1613-67), English divine, author of *Holy Living* and *Holy Dying*.

<sup>452</sup> One of Emerson's longest poems. Only the first of the two parts of the poem is here reproduced. Alfred Kreymborg (*Our Singing Strength*, New York, 1929, p. 77) says, "Woodnotes I and II" are among the longest and most sustained of Emerson's ecstatic hymns. They are a survey of all he felt, thought and believed . . ."

Or how meet in human elf  
Coming and past eternities?

## 2

And such I knew, a forest seer,<sup>453</sup>  
A minstrel of the natural year,  
Foreteller of the vernal ides,  
Wise harbinger of spheres and tides,  
A lover true, who knew by heart  
Each joy the mountain dales impart;  
It seemed that Nature could not raise  
A plant in any secret place,  
In quaking bog, on snowy hill,  
Beneath the grass that shades the rill,  
Under the snow, between the rocks,  
In damp fields known to bird and fox,  
But he would come in the very hour  
It opened in its virgin bower,  
As if a sunbeam showed the place,  
And tell its long-descended race.  
It seemed as if the breezes brought him,  
It seemed as if the sparrows taught him;  
As if by secret sight he knew  
Where, in far fields, the orchis grew.  
Many haps fall in the field  
Seldom seen by wishful eyes  
But all her shows did Nature yield,  
To please and win this pilgrim wise.  
He saw the partridge drum in the woods;  
He heard the woodcock's evening hymn;  
He found the tawny thrushes' broods;  
And the shy hawk did wait for him;  
What others did at distance hear,  
And guessed within the thicket's gloom,  
Was shown to this philosopher,  
And at his bidding seemed to come.

## 3

In unploughed Maine he sought the lumberers' gang  
Where from a hundred lakes young rivers sprang;  
He trod the unplanted forest floor, whereon  
The all-seeing sun for ages hath not shone;  
Where feeds the moose, and walks the surly bear,  
And up the tall mast runs the woodpecker.  
He saw beneath dim aisles, in odorous beds,  
The slight Linnæa<sup>454</sup> hang its twin-born heads.  
And blessed the monument of the man of flowers, 70

<sup>453</sup> Thought to be a reference to Thoreau.

<sup>454</sup> A slender flowering evergreen.

Which breathes his sweet fame through the  
northern bowers.

He heard, when in the grove, at intervals,  
With sudden roar the aged pine-tree falls,—  
30 One crash, the death-hymn of the perfect tree,  
Declares the close of its green century.  
Low lies the plant to whose creation went  
Sweet influence from every element;  
Whose living towers the years conspired to build,  
Whose giddy top the morning loved to gild.  
Through these green tents, by eldest Nature  
dressed, 80  
He roamed, content alike with man and beast.  
Where darkness found him he lay glad at night;  
40 There the red morning touched him with its light.  
Three moons his great heart him a hermit made,  
So long he roved at will the boundless shade.  
The timid it concerns to ask their way,  
And fear what foe in caves and swamps can stray,  
To make no step until the event is known,  
And ills to come as evils past bemoan.  
Not so the wise; no coward watch he keeps 90  
To spy what danger on his pathway creeps;  
Go where he will, the wise man is at home,  
50 His hearth the earth,—his hall the azure dome;  
Where his clear spirit leads him, there's his road  
By God's own light illumined and foreshowed.

## 4

'T was one of the charmed days  
When the genius of God doth flow;  
The wind may alter twenty ways,  
A tempest cannot blow;  
It may blow north, it still is warm; 100  
60 Or south, it still is clear;  
Or east, it smells like a clover-farm;  
Or west, no thunder fear.  
The musing peasant, lowly great,  
Beside the forest water sate;  
The rope-like pine-roots crosswise grown  
Composed the network of his throne;  
The wide lake, edged with sand and grass,  
Was burnished to a floor of glass,  
Painted with shadows green and proud 110  
Of the tree and of the cloud.  
He was the heart of all the scene;  
On him the sun looked more serene;  
To hill and cloud his face was known,—  
It seemed the likeness of their own;

They knew by secret sympathy  
 The public child of earth and sky.  
 "You ask," he said, "what guide  
 Me through trackless thickets led,  
 Through thick-stemmed woodlands rough and  
     wide. 120  
 I found the water's bed.  
 The watercourses were my guide;  
 I travelled grateful by their side,  
 Or through their channel dry:  
 They led me through the thicket damp,  
 Through brake and fern, the beavers' camp,  
 Through beds of granite cut my road,  
 And their resistless friendship showed:  
 The falling waters led me,  
 The foodful waters fed me, 130  
 And brought me to the lowest land,  
 Unerring to the ocean sand.  
 The moss upon the forest bark  
 Was pole-star when the night was dark;  
 The purple berries in the wood  
 Supplied me necessary food;  
 For Nature ever faithful is  
 To such as trust her faithfulness.  
 When the forest shall mislead me,  
 When the night and morning lie, 140  
 When sea and land refuse to feed me,  
 'T will be time enough to die;  
 Then will yet my mother yield  
 A pillow in her greenest field,  
 Nor the June flowers scorn to cover  
 The clay of their departed lover."  
 1840

### *The Sphinx* <sup>455</sup>

The Sphinx is drowsy,  
 Her wings are furred:  
 Her ear is heavy,  
 She broods on the world.  
 "Who'll tell me my secret,  
 The ages have kept?—  
 I awaited the scer  
 While they slumbered and slept:—

<sup>455</sup> In 1859 Emerson wrote into his *Journals* this statement which may be helpful to the perennial succession of students who ask, "What does he mean?": "I have often been asked the meaning of the 'Sphinx.' It is this,—The perception of identity unites all things and explains one by another, and the most rare and strange is equally facile as the most common. But if the mind live only in particulars, and see only differences (wanting

"The fate of the mān-child,  
 The meaning of man; 10  
 Known fruit of the unknown;  
 Dædalian <sup>456</sup> plan;  
 Out of sleeping a waking,  
 Out of waking a sleep;  
 Life death overtaking;  
 Deep underneath deep?  
 "Erect as a sunbeam,  
 Upspringeth the palm;  
 The elephant browses,  
 Undaunted and calm; 20  
 In beautiful motion  
 The thrush plies his wings;  
 Kind leaves of his covert,  
 Your silence he sings.  
 "The waves, unashamed,  
 In difference sweet,  
 Play glad with the breezes,  
 Old playfellows meet;  
 The journeying atoms,  
 Primordial wholes, 30  
 Firmly draw, firmly drive,  
 By their animate poles.  
 "Sca, earth, air, sound, silence,  
 Plant, quadruped, bird,  
 By one music enchanted,  
 One deity stirred,—  
 Each the other adorning,  
 Accompany still;  
 Night veileth the morning,  
 The vapor the hill. 40  
 "The babe by its mother  
 Lies bathed in joy;  
 Glide its hours uncounted,—  
 The sun is its toy;  
 Shines the peace of all being,  
 Without cloud, in its eyes;  
 And the sum of the world  
 In soft miniature lies.

the power to see the whole—all in each), then the world addresses to this mind a question it cannot answer, and each new fact tears it to pieces, and it is vanquished by the distracting variety."

From this point of view "The Sphinx" becomes a commentary on Emerson's poem "Each and All."

<sup>456</sup> Daedalus, the builder of the Cretan labyrinth. Hence a Daedalian plan is a complicated, intricate one.

"But man crouches and blushes,  
 Absconds and conceals;  
 He creepeth and peepeth,  
 He palter and steals;  
 Infirm, melancholy,  
 Jealous glancing around,  
 An oaf, an accomplice,  
 He poisons the ground.

"Out spoke the great mother,  
 Beholding his fear;—  
 At the sound of her accents  
 Cold shuddered the sphere:—  
 'Who has drugged my boy's cup?  
 Who has mixed my boy's bread?  
 Who, with sadness and madness,  
 Has turned my child's head?' "

I heard a poet answer  
 Aloud and cheerfully,  
 "Say on, sweet Sphinx! thy dirges  
 Are pleasant songs to me.  
 Deep love lieth under  
 These pictures of time;  
 They fade in the light of  
 Their meaning sublime.

"The fiend that man harries  
 Is love of the Best;  
 Yawns the pit of the Dragon,<sup>457</sup>  
 Lit by rays from the Blest.<sup>458</sup>  
 The Lethe of Nature  
 Can't trance him again,  
 Whose soul sees the perfect,  
 Which his eyes seek in vain.

"To vision profounder,  
 Man's spirit must dive;  
 His aye-rolling<sup>459</sup> orb  
 At no goal will arrive;  
 The heavens that now draw him  
 With sweetness untold,  
 Once found,—for new heavens  
 He spurneth the old.

"Pride ruined the angels,  
 Their shame them restores;

<sup>457</sup> See Revelation 17:8, 19:20, 20:1-3.

<sup>458</sup> See Revelation 21.

<sup>459</sup> That is, ever-rolling.

Lurks the joy that is sweetest  
 50 In stings of remorse.  
 Have I a lover  
 Who is noble and free?—  
 I would he were nobler  
 Than to love me.

"Eterne alternation  
 Now follows, now flies;  
 And under pain, pleasure,—  
 Under pleasure, pain lies. 100  
 Love works at the centre,  
 Heart-heaving away;  
 Forth speed the strong pulses  
 To the borders of day.

"Dull Sphinx, Jove keep thy five wits;  
 Thy sight is growing bleak;  
 Rue, myrrh and cummin<sup>460</sup> for the Sphinx,  
 Her muddy eyes to clear!"  
 The old Sphinx bit her thick lip,—  
 Said, "Who taught thee me to name? 110  
 I am thy spirit, yoke-fellow;  
 70 Of thine eye I am eyebeam.

"Thou art the unanswered question;  
 Couldst see thy proper eye,  
 Always it asketh, asketh;  
 And each answer is a lie.  
 So take thy quest through nature,  
 It through thousand natures ply;  
 Ask on, thou clothed eternity;  
 Time is the false reply." 120

80 Uprose the merry Sphinx,  
 And crouched no more in stone;  
 She melted into purple cloud,  
 She silvered in the moon;  
 She spired into a yellow flame;  
 She flowered in blossoms red;  
 She flowed into a foaming wave:  
 She stood Monadnock's<sup>461</sup> head.

Through a thousand voices  
 Spoke the universal dame;  
 "Who telleth one of my meanings,  
 90 Is master of all I am."

1841

1841

<sup>460</sup> Herbs with curative properties.

<sup>461</sup> A mountain in New Hampshire.

*Friendship*

A ruddy drop of manly blood  
 The surging sea outweighs,  
 The world uncertain comes and goes,  
 The lover rooted stays.  
 I fancied he was fled,—  
 And, after many a year,  
 Glowed unexhausted kindliness,  
 Like daily sunrise there.  
 My careful heart was free again,  
 O friend, my bosom said,  
 Through thee alone the sky is arched,  
 Through thee the rose is red;  
 All things through thee take nobler form,  
 And look beyond the earth,  
 'The mill-round of our fate appears  
 A sun-path in thy worth.  
 Me too thy nobleness has taught  
 To master my despair;  
 The fountains of my hidden life  
 Are through thy friendship fair.  
 1841 (?) 1841

*The Snow-Storm* <sup>462</sup>

Announced by all the trumpets of the sky,  
 Arrives the snow, and, driving o'er the fields,  
 Seems nowhere to alight: the whited air  
 Hides hills and woods, the river, and the heaven,  
 And veils the farm-house at the garden's end.  
 The sled and traveller stopped, the courier's feet  
 Delayed, all friends shut out, the housemates sit  
 Around the radiant fireplace, enclosed  
 In a tumultuous privacy of storm.

Come see the north wind's masonry.  
 Out of an unseen quarry evermore  
 Furnished with tile, the fierce artificer  
 Curves his white bastions with projected roof  
 Round every windward stake, or tree, or door.  
 Speeding, the myriad-handed, his wild work  
 So fanciful, so savage, nought cares he

<sup>462</sup> Notable for its individual lines, this poem supplied Whittier with a motto for his "Snow-Bound" (lines 1-9). In his *Journals* for November 27, 1832, Emerson wrote, "Instead of lectures on Architecture, I will make a lecture on God's architecture, one of his beautiful works, a Day. I will draw a sketch of a winter's day. I will trace as I can a rude outline of the far-assembled influences, the contribution of the universe wherein this magical structure rises like an exhalation, the wonder and charm of the immeasurable deep."

For number or proportion. Mockingly,  
 On coop or kennel he hangs Parian <sup>463</sup> wreaths;  
 A swan-like form invests the hidden thorn;  
 Fills up the farmer's lane from wall to wall, 20  
 Maugre <sup>464</sup> the farmer's sighs; and at the gate  
 A tapering turret overtops the work.  
 And when his hours are numbered, and the world  
 Is all his own, retiring, as he were not,  
 Leaves, when the sun appears, astonished Art  
 To mimic in slow structures, stone by stone,  
 Built in an age, the mad wind's nightwork,  
 The frolic architecture of the snow.  
 1841 1841

*Forbearance* <sup>465</sup>

Hast thou named all the birds without a gun?  
 Loved the wood-rose, and left it on its stalk?  
 At rich men's tables eaten bread and pulse?  
 Unarmed, faced danger with a heart of trust?  
 And loved so well a high behavior,  
 In man or maid, that thou from speech refrained,  
 Nobility more nobly to repay?  
 O, be my friend, and teach me to be thine!  
 c. 1841 1842

*Fable* <sup>466</sup>

The mountain and the squirrel  
 Had a quarrel,  
 And the former called the latter "Little Prig,"  
 Bun replied,  
 "You are doubtless very big;  
 But all sorts of things and weather  
 Must be taken in together,  
 To make up a year  
 And a sphere.  
 And I think it no disgrace 10  
 To occupy my place.  
 If I'm not so large as you,  
 You are not so small as I,  
 And not half so spry.

<sup>463</sup> Parian marble was used by sculptors in ancient times.

<sup>464</sup> In spite of.

<sup>465</sup> Edward Waldo Emerson has suggested that his father may have had Thoreau in mind while he wrote these lines of restrained praise.

<sup>466</sup> Another commentary on the idea expressed in "Each and All," namely, that "all are needed by each one" and that "nothing is fair or good alone."

I'll not deny you make  
A very pretty squirrel track;  
Talents differ; all is well and wisely put;  
If I cannot carry forests on my back,  
Neither can you crack a nut."

1845

1847

### *Threnody*<sup>467</sup>

The South-wind brings  
Life, sunshine and desire,  
And on every mount and meadow  
Breathes aromatic fire;  
But over the dead he has no power,  
The lost, the lost, he cannot restore;  
And, looking over the hills, I mourn  
The darling who shall not return.

I see my empty house.  
I see my trees repair their boughs;  
And he, the wondrous child,  
Whose silver warble wild  
Outvalued every pulsing sound  
Within the air's cerulean round,—  
The hyacinthine boy, for whom  
Morn well might break and April bloom,  
The gracious boy, who did adorn  
The world whereinto he was born,  
And by his countenance repay  
The favor of the loving Day,—  
Has disappeared from the Day's eye;  
Far and wide she cannot find him;  
My hopes pursue, they cannot bind him.  
Returned this day, the South-wind searches,  
And finds young pines and budding birches;  
But finds not the budding man;  
Nature, who lost, cannot remake him;  
Fate let him fall, Fate can't retake him;  
Nature, Fate, men, him seek in vain.

And whither now, my truant wise and sweet,  
O, whither tend thy feet?  
I had the right, few days ago,  
Thy steps to watch, thy place to know:

How have I forfeited the right?  
Hast thou forgot me in a new delight?  
I hearken for thy household cheer,  
O eloquent child!  
Whose voice, an equal messenger,  
Conveyed thy meaning mild.  
What though the pains and joys  
Whereof it spoke were toys  
Fitting his age and ken,  
Yet fairest dames and bearded men,  
Who heard the sweet request,  
So gentle, wise and grave,  
Bended with joy to his behest  
And let the world's affairs go by,  
A while to share his cordial game,  
Or mend his wicker wagon-frame,  
Still plotting how their hungry car  
That winsome voice again might hear;  
For his lips could well pronounce  
Words that were persuasions.

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Gentlest guardians marked serene  
His early hope, his liberal mien;  
Took counsel from his guiding eyes  
To make this wisdom earthly wise.  
Ah, vainly do these eyes recall  
The school-march, each day's festival,  
When every morn my bosom glowed  
To watch the convoy on the road;  
The babe in willow wagon closed,  
With rolling eyes and face composed;  
With children forward and behind,  
Like Cupids studiously inclined;  
And he the chieftain paced beside,  
The centre of the troop allied,  
With sunny face of sweet repose,  
To guard the babe from fancied foes.  
The little captain innocent  
Took the eye with him as he went;  
Each village senior paused to scan  
And speak the lovely caravan.  
From the window I look out  
To mark thy beautiful parade,  
Stately marching in cap and coat

<sup>467</sup> This elegy commemorates Emerson's little son who died in January, 1842. Soon thereafter Emerson wrote to Carlyle: "My son, a perfect little boy of five years and three months, has ended his earthly life. You can never sympathize with me; you can never know how much of me such a young child can take away. A few weeks ago I accounted myself a very rich man, and now the poorest of all. . . . From a perfect health and as

happy influences as ever child enjoyed, he was hurried out of my arms in three short days by scarlatine. . . . I dare not fathom the Invisible and Untold to inquire what relations to my Departed ones I yet sustain."

The latter portion of the poem, beginning line 176, was not written until some time later when "Time and Thought had brought their healing."

To some tune by fairies played;—  
A music heard by thee alone  
To works as noble led thee on.

Now Love and Pride, alas! in vain,  
Up and down their glances strain.  
The painted sled stands where it stood;  
The kennel by the corded wood;  
His gathered sticks to stanch the wall  
Of the snow-tower, when snow should fall;  
The ominous hole he dug in the sand,  
And childhood's castles built or planned;  
His daily haunts I well discern.—  
The poultry-yard, the shed, the barn,—  
And every inch of garden ground  
Paced by the blessed feet around,  
From the roadside to the brook  
Whereinto he loved to look.  
Step the meek fowls where erst they ranged;  
The wintry garden lies unchanged;  
The brook into the stream runs on;  
But the deep-eyed boy is gone.

On that shaded day,  
Dark with more clouds than tempests are,  
When thou didst yield thy innocent breath  
In birdlike heavings unto death,  
Night came, and Nature had not thee;  
I said, "We are mates in misery."  
The morrow dawned with needless glow;  
Each snowbird chirped, each fowl must crow;  
Each trampler started; but the feet  
Of the most beautiful and sweet  
Of human youth had left the hill  
And garden,—they were bound and still.  
There's not a sparrow or a wren,  
There's not a blade of autumn grain,  
Which the four seasons do not tend  
And tides of life and increase lend;  
And every chick of every bird,  
And weed and rock-moss is preferred.  
O ostrich-like forgetfulness!  
O loss of larger in the less!  
Was there no star that could be sent,  
No watcher in the firmament,  
No angel from the countless host  
That loiters round the crystal coast,  
Could stoop to heal that only child,  
Nature's sweet marvel undefiled,  
And keep the blossom of the earth,

Which all her harvests were not worth?  
Not mine,—I never called thee mine,  
But Nature's heir,—if I repine,  
80 And seeing rashly torn and moved  
Not what I made, but what I loved,  
Grow early old with grief that thou  
Must to the wastes of Nature go,—  
'T is because a general hope  
Was quenched, and all must doubt and grope.  
For flattering planets seemed to say  
This child should ill of ages stay,  
By wondrous tongue, and guided pen,  
Bring the flown Muses back to men.  
Perchance not he but Nature ailed,  
90 The world and not the infant failed.  
It was not ripe yet to sustain  
A genius of so fine a strain,  
Who gazed upon the sun and moon  
As if he came unto his own,  
And, pregnant with his grander thought,  
Brought the old order into doubt.  
His beauty once their beauty tried;  
They could not feed him, and he died,  
And wandered backward as in scorn,  
To wait an æon to be born.  
100 Ill day which made this beauty waste,  
Plight broken, this high face defaced!  
Some went and came about the dead;  
And some in books of solace read;  
Some to their friends the tidings say;  
Some went to write, some went to pray;  
One tarried here, there hurried one;  
But their heart abode with none.  
Covetous death bereaved us all,  
110 To aggrandize one funeral.  
The eager fate which carried thee  
Took the largest part of me:  
For this losing is true dying;  
This is lordly man's down-lying,  
This his slow but sure reclining,  
Star by star his world resigning.

O child of paradise,  
Boy who made dear his father's home,  
120 In whose deep eyes  
Men read the welfare of the times to come,  
I am too much bereft.  
The world dishonored thou hast left.  
O truth's and nature's costly lie!



O trusted broken prophecy!  
 O richest fortune sourly crossed!  
 Born for the future, to the future lost!

The deep Heart <sup>468</sup> answered, "Weepest thou?  
 Worthier cause for passion wild  
 If I had not taken the child.  
 And deemest thou as those who pore,  
 With aged eyes, short way before,—  
 Think'st Beauty vanished from the coast  
 Of matter, and thy darling lost?  
 Taught he not thee—the man of old,  
 Whose eyes within his eyes beheld  
 Heaven's numerous hierarchy span  
 The mystic gulf from God to man?  
 To be alone wilt thou begin  
 When worlds of lovers hem thee in?  
 To-morrow, when the masks shall fall  
 That dizen <sup>469</sup> Nature's carnival,  
 The pure shall see by their own will,  
 Which overflowing Love shall fill,  
 'T is not within the force of fate  
 The fate-conjoined to separate.  
 But thou, my votary, weepest thou?  
 I gave thee sight—where is it now?  
 I taught thy heart beyond the reach  
 Of ritual, bible, or of speech:  
 Wrote in thy mind's transparent table,  
 As far as the incommunicable;  
 Taught thee each private sign to raise  
 Lit by the supersolar <sup>470</sup> blaze.  
 Past utterance, and past belief,  
 And past the blasphemy of grief  
 The mysteries of Nature's heart;  
 And though no Muse can these impart,  
 Throb thine with Nature's throbbing breast  
 And all is clear from east to west.

"I came to thee as to a friend;  
 Dearest, to thee I did not send  
 Tutors, but a joyful eye,  
 Innocence that matched the sky,  
 Lovely locks, a form of wonder,  
 Laughter rich as woodland thunder,  
 That thou might'st entertain apart  
 The richest flowering of all art:  
 And, as the great all-loving Day

Through smallest chambers takes its way,  
 That thou might'st break thy daily bread  
 With prophet, savior and head;  
 That thou might'st cherish for thine own  
 The riches of sweet Mary's Son,  
 Boy-Rabbi, Israel's paragon.  
 And thoughtest thou such guest  
 Would in thy hall take up his rest?  
 Would rushing life forget her laws,  
 Fate's glowing revolution pause?  
 High omens ask diviner guess;  
 Not to be conned to tediousness  
 And know my higher gifts unbind  
 The zone that girds the incarnate mind.  
 When the scanty shores are full  
 With Thought's perilous, whirling pool;  
 When frail Nature can no more,  
 Then the Spirit strikes the hour:  
 My servant Death, with solving rite,  
 Pours finite into infinite.  
 Wilt thou freeze love's tidal flow,  
 Whose streams through Nature circling go?

Nail the wild star to its track  
 On the half-climbed zodiac?  
 Light is light which radiates,  
 Blood is blood which circulates,  
 Life is life which generates,  
 And many-seeming life is one,—  
 Wilt thou transfix and make it none?  
 Its onward force too starkly pent  
 In figure, bone, and lineament?  
 Wilt thou, uncalled, interrogate,  
 Talker! the unreplying Fate?  
 Nor see the genius of the whole  
 Ascendant in the private soul,  
 Beckon it when to go and come,  
 Self-announced its hour of doom?  
 Fair the soul's recess and shrine,  
 Magic-built to last a season;  
 Masterpiece of love benign,  
 Fairer that expansive reason  
 Whose omen 't is, and sign.  
 Wilt thou not open thy heart to know  
 What rainbows teach, and sunsets show?  
 Verdict which accumulates  
 From lengthening scroll of human fates,  
 Voice of earth to earth returned,  
 Prayers of saints that inly burned,—

<sup>468</sup> The over-soul, or Nature regarded as a spiritual entity.

<sup>469</sup> That is, bedizen, or deck, or dress.

<sup>470</sup> Literally, beyond the sun.

Saying, *What is excellent,*  
*As God lives, is permanent;*  
*Hearts are dust, hearts' loves remain;*  
*Heart's love will meet thee again.*  
 Revere the Maker; fetch thine eye  
 270 Up to his style, and manners of the sky.  
 Not of adamant and gold  
 Built he heaven stark and cold;  
 No, but a nest of bending reeds,  
 Flowering grass and scented weeds;  
 Or like a traveller's fleeing tent,  
 Or bow above the tempest bent;  
 Built of tears and sacred flames,  
 And virtue reaching to its aims;  
 Built of furtherance and pursuing,  
 280 Not of spent deeds, but of doing.  
 Silent rushes the swift Lord  
 Through ruined systems still restored,  
 Broadsowing, bleak and void to bless,  
 Plants with worlds the wilderness;  
 Waters with tears of ancient sorrow  
 Apples of Eden ripe to-morrow.  
 House and tenant go to ground,  
 Lost in God, in Godhead found."  
 c. 1842-6

1847

## Ode

INSCRIBED TO W. H. CHANNING <sup>471</sup>

Though loath to grieve  
 The evil time's sole patriot,  
 I cannot leave  
 My honied thought  
 For the priest's cant,  
 Or statesman's rant.

If I refuse  
 My study for their politique,  
 Which at the best is trick,

<sup>471</sup> "The circumstance which gave rise to this poem, though not known, can easily be inferred," wrote E. W. Emerson, in editing his father's poems for the collected Centenary Edition. "Rev. William Henry Channing, nephew of the great Unitarian divine, a man of most tender sympathies, with an apostle's zeal for right, had, no doubt, been urging his friend to join the brave band of men who were dedicating their lives to the destruction of human slavery in the United States. To these men Mr. Emerson gave honor and sympathy and active aid by word and presence on important occasions. He showed his colors from the first, and spoke fearlessly on the subject in his lectures, but his method was the reverse of theirs, affirmative not negative; he knew his office and followed his genius. He said, 'I have quite other slaves to free than those negroes, to wit, imprisoned

The angry Muse  
 Puts confusion in my brain.

10

But who is he that prates  
 Of the culture of mankind,  
 Of better arts and life?  
 Go, blindworm, go,  
 Behold the famous States  
 Harrying Mexico  
 With rifle and with knife! <sup>472</sup>

Or who, with accent bolder,  
 Dare praise the freedom-loving mountaineer? <sup>20</sup>  
 I found by thee, O rushing Contoocook! <sup>473</sup>  
 And in thy valleys, Agiochook! <sup>474</sup>  
 280 The jackals <sup>475</sup> of the negro-holder.

The God who made New Hampshire  
 Taunted the lofty land  
 With little men;—  
 Small bat and wren  
 House in the oak:—  
 If earth-fire cleave  
 The upheaved land, and bury the folk, <sup>30</sup>  
 The southern crocodile would grieve.  
 Virtue palters; Right is hence;  
 Freedom praised, but hid;  
 Funeral eloquence  
 Rattles the coffin-lid.

What boots thy zeal,  
 O glowing friend,  
 That would indignant rend  
 The northland from the south?  
 Wherefore? to what good end? <sup>40</sup>  
 Boston Bay and Bunker Hill  
 Would serve things still;—  
 Things are of the snake.

The horseman serves the horse,  
 The neatherd serves the neat, <sup>476</sup>  
 The merchant serves the purse,

spirits, imprisoned thoughts.' " The poem is especially interesting as embodying Emerson's conviction that reforms are not to be effected by outward means, whether the "statesman's rant" or the "reformer's zeal." Instead, white man and black man alike must learn, through self-discipline, to free themselves from slavery to "the law of thing" which "doth the man unking."  
<sup>472</sup> Emerson, like many Northerners, opposed the Mexican War (1846-48), as a war for the extension of slave territory.

<sup>473</sup> The Contoocook River in New Hampshire.

<sup>474</sup> Indian name for the White Mountains in New Hampshire.

<sup>475</sup> The jackal, or wild dog, once supposed to hunt game for the lion is here used to designate the Northerner who helps return the fugitive slave to the Southern owner.

<sup>476</sup> Cattle.

The eater serves his meat;  
 'T is the day of the chattel,  
 Web to weave, and corn to grind;  
 Things are in the saddle,  
 And ride mankind.

There are two laws discrete,<sup>477</sup>  
 Not reconciled,—  
 Law for man, and law for thing;  
 The last builds town and fleet,  
 But it runs wild,  
 And doth the man unking.

'T is fit the forest fall,  
 The steep be graded.  
 The mountain tunnelled,  
 The sand shaded,  
 The orchard planted,  
 The glebe tilled,  
 The prairie granted,  
 The steamer built.

Let man serve law for man;  
 Live for friendship, live for love,  
 For truth's and harmony's behoof;  
 The state may follow how it can,  
 As Olympus follows Jove.<sup>478</sup>

Yet do not I implore  
 The wrinkled shopman to my sounding woods,  
 Nor bid the unwilling senator  
 Ask votes of thrushes in the solitudes.  
 Every one to his chosen work;—  
 Foolish hands may mix and mar;  
 Wise and sure the issues are.  
 Round they roll till dark is light,  
 Sex to sex, and even to odd;—  
 The over-god  
 Who marries Right to Might,  
 Who peoples, unpeoples,—  
 He who exterminates  
 Races by stronger races,  
 Black by white faces,—

<sup>477</sup> Separate, distinct.

<sup>478</sup> Jove was the father and ruler of the gods.

<sup>479</sup> See Judges 14:9. Samson found honey in the carcass of a lion.

<sup>480</sup> Following the failure of the Polish uprising in 1830-31, Russia established a harsh military despotism in Russian Poland.

<sup>481</sup> This ode, in which Emerson achieves (for him) unusually high quality of verbal music, should be compared with his essay on "Beauty" in *The Conduct of Life* volume of 1860. Thoreau, however, found some faults in the poem and wrote to Emerson: "The tune is altogether unworthy of the thoughts. You slope

Knows to bring honey <sup>479</sup>  
 Out of the lion;  
 Grafts gentlest scion  
 On pirate and Turk.

The Cossack cats Poland,<sup>480</sup> 90  
 Like stolen fruit;  
 Her last noble is ruined,  
 Her last poet mute:  
 Straight, into double band  
 The victors divide;  
 Half for freedom strike and stand;—  
 The astonished Muse finds thousands at her side.

1847

60

### *Ode to Beauty* <sup>481</sup>

Who gave thee, O Beauty,  
 The keys of this breast,—  
 Too credulous lover  
 Of blest and unblest?  
 Say, when in lapsed ages  
 Thee knew I of old?  
 Or what was the service  
 For which I was sold?  
 When first my eyes saw thee,  
 I found me thy thrall,  
 By magical drawings,  
 Sweet tyrant of all!  
 I drank at thy fountain  
 False waters of thirst;  
 Thou intimate stranger,  
 Thou latest and first!  
 Thy dangerous glances  
 Make women of men;  
 New-born, we are melting  
 Into nature again.

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Lavish, lavish promiser,  
 Nigh persuading gods to err!  
 Guest of million painted forms,  
 Which in turn thy glory warms!

too quickly to the rhyme, as if that trick should be performed as soon as possible, or as if you stood over the line with a hatchet and chopped off the verses as they came out, some short and some long. But give us a long reel and we'll chop it off to suit ourselves. It sounds like parody. 'Thee knew I of old,' 'Remediless thirst' are some of those stereotyped lines. . . . Yet I love your poetry as I do little else that is near and recent, especially when you get fairly round the end of the line, and are not thrown back upon the rocks."—Quoted from Centenary ed. of Emerson's *Writings*, IX, 431-32.

The frailest leaf, the mossy bark,  
 The acorn's cup, the raindrop's arc,  
 The swinging spider's silver line,  
 The ruby of the drop of wine,  
 The shining pebble of the pond,  
 Thou inscribest with a bond,  
 In thy momentary play,  
 Would bankrupt nature to repay.

Ah, what avails it  
 To hide or to shun  
 Whom the Infinite One  
 Hath granted his throne?  
 The heaven high over  
 Is the deep's lover;  
 The sun and sea,  
 Informed by thee,  
 Before me run  
 And draw me on,  
 Yet fly me still,  
 As Fate refuses  
 To me the heart Fate for me chooses.  
 Is it that my opulent soul  
 Was mingled from the generous whole;  
 Sea-valleys and the deep of skies  
 Furnished several supplies;  
 And the sands whereof I'm made  
 Draw me to them, self-betrayed?  
 I turn the proud portfolio  
 Which holds the grand designs  
 Of Salvator,<sup>482</sup> of Guercino,<sup>483</sup>  
 And Piranesi's<sup>484</sup> lines.  
 I hear the lofty pæans  
 Of the masters of the shell,  
 Who heard the starry music  
 And recount the numbers well;  
 Olympian bards who sung  
 Divine Ideas below,  
 Which always find us young  
 And always keep us so.  
 Oft, in streets or humblest places,  
 I detect far-wandering graces,  
 Which, from Eden wide astray,  
 In lowly homes have lost their way.

Thee gliding through the sea of form,  
 Like the lightning through the storm,

<sup>482</sup> Salvator Rosa (1615?-1673), Neapolitan painter.

<sup>483</sup> Pseudonym for Giovanni Francesco Barbieri (1591-1666), Bolognese painter.

<sup>484</sup> Giambattista Piranesi (1720-78), Italian engraver.

Somewhat not to be possessed,  
 Somewhat not to be caressed,  
 No feet so fleet could ever find,  
 No perfect form could ever bind.  
 Thou eternal fugitive,  
 30 Hovering over all that live,  
 Quick and skilful to inspire  
 Sweet, extravagant desire,  
 Starry space and lily-bell  
 Filling with thy roscate smell,  
 80 Wilt not give the lips to taste  
 Of the nectar which thou hast.

All that's good and great with thee  
 Works in close conspiracy;  
 Thou hast bribed the dark and lonely  
 40 To report thy features only,  
 And the cold and purple morning  
 Itself with thoughts of thee adorning;  
 The leafy dell, the city mart,  
 Equal trophies of thine art;  
 E'en the flowing azure air  
 90 Thou hast touched for my despair;  
 And, if I languish into dreams,  
 Again I meet the ardent beams.  
 Queen of things! I dare not die  
 50 In Being's deeps past ear and eye;  
 Lest there I find the same deceiver  
 And be the sport of Fate forever.  
 Dread Power, but dear! if God thou be,  
 Unmake me quite, or give thyself to me!

1843

### *Experience*<sup>485</sup>

The lords of life, the lords of life,—  
 60 I saw them pass,  
 In their own guise,  
 Like and unlike,  
 Portly and grim,  
 Use and Surprise,  
 Surface and Dream,  
 Succession swift, and spectral Wrong,  
 Temperament without a tongue,  
 And the inventor of the game  
 10 Omnipresent without name;—  
 Some to see, some to be guessed,  
 They marched from east to west:

<sup>485</sup> Emerson composed these lines as a motto for his essay "Experience," published in *Essays: Second Series*, 1844.

Little man, least of all,  
 Among the legs of his guardians tall,  
 Walked about with puzzled look:—  
 Him by the hand dear Nature took;  
 Dearest Nature, strong and kind,  
 Whispered, "Darling, never mind!  
 To-morrow they will wear another face,  
 The founder thou! these are thy race!"

1844

*Character*<sup>486</sup>

The sun set, but set not his hope:  
 Stars rose; his faith was earlier up:  
 Fixed on the enormous galaxy,  
 Deeper and older seemed his eye:  
 And matched his sufferance sublime  
 The taciturnity of time.  
 He spoke, and words more soft than rain  
 Brought the Age of Gold again:  
 His action won such reverence sweet  
 As hid all measure of the feat.

1844

*Politics*<sup>487</sup>

Gold and iron are good  
 To buy iron and gold;  
 All earth's fleece and food  
 For their like are sold.  
 Boded Merlin wise,  
 Proved Napoleon great,—  
 Nor kind nor coinage buys  
 Aught above its rate.  
 Fear, Craft and Avarice  
 Cannot rear a State.  
 Out of dust to build  
 What is more than dust,—  
 Walls Amphion<sup>488</sup> piled  
 Phœbus stablish must.  
 When the Muses nine  
 With the Virtues meet,  
 Find to their design  
 An Atlantic seat,  
 By green orchard boughs

<sup>486</sup> Used as a motto for the essay on "Character."<sup>487</sup> Emerson's poetic motto prefixed to the essay on "Politics."<sup>488</sup> Amphion, son of Jupiter and Antiope, whose lyre music caused stones to move and form themselves into the wall around Thebes.

Fended from the heat,  
 Where the statesman ploughs  
 Furrow for the wheat;  
 When the Church is social worth,  
 When the state-house is the hearth,  
 Then the perfect State is come,  
 The republican at home.

20

1844

*Give All to Love*<sup>489</sup>

Give all to love;  
 Obey thy heart;  
 Friends, kindred, days,  
 Estate, good-fame,  
 Plans, credit and the Muse,—  
 Nothing refuse.

'T is a brave master;  
 Let it have scope:  
 Follow it utterly,  
 Hope beyond hope:  
 High and more high  
 It dives into noon,  
 With wing unspent,  
 Untold intent;  
 But it is a god,  
 Knows its own path  
 And the outlets of the sky.

It was never for the mean;  
 It requireth courage stout.  
 Souls above doubt,  
 Valor unbending,  
 It will reward,—  
 They shall return  
 More than they were,  
 And ever ascending.

Leave all for love;  
 Yet, hear me, yet,  
 One word more thy heart behoved,  
 One pulse more of firm endeavor,—  
 Keep thee to-day,  
 To-morrow, forever,  
 Free as an Arab  
 Of thy beloved.

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<sup>489</sup> To be compared with Emerson's essay on "Love" and to his longer poem on "Initial, Daemonic, and Celestial Love." In the last-named poem Emerson follows the three planes of love as differentiated in Plato's *Banquet*.

Cling with life to the maid;  
 But when the surprise,  
 First vague shadow of surmise  
 Flits across her bosom young,  
 Of a joy apart from thee,  
 Free be she, fancy-free;  
 Nor thou detain her vesture's hem,  
 Nor the palest rose she flung  
 From her summer diadem.

Though thou loved her as thyself,  
 As a self of purer clay,  
 Though her parting dims the day,  
 Stealing grace from all alive;  
 Heartily know,  
 When half-gods go,  
 The gods arrive.

1847

*Hamatreya*<sup>490</sup>

Bulkeley, Hunt, Willard, Hosmer, Meriam,  
 Flint,<sup>491</sup>  
 Possessed the land which rendered to their toil  
 Hay, corn, roots, hemp, flax, apples, wool and  
 wood.

Each of these landlords walked amidst his farm,  
 Saying, "'T is mine, my children's and my  
 name's.

How sweet the west wind sounds in my own trees!  
 How graceful climb those shadows on my hill!  
 I fancy these pure waters and the flags  
 Know me, as does my dog: we sympathize;  
 And, I affirm, my actions smack of the soil."

10

Where are these men? Asleep beneath their  
 grounds:

And strangers, fond<sup>492</sup> as they, their furrows  
 plough.

Earth laughs in flowers, to see her boastful boys  
 Earth-proud, proud of the earth which is not  
 theirs;

<sup>490</sup> This poem was inspired by a passage from the *Vishnu Purana*, oldest of the sacred scriptures of Vishnu, which Emerson copied into his journal for 1845. The passage ends: "These were the verses, Maitreya, which Earth recited and by listening to which ambition fades away like snow before the wind."—*Journals*, VII, 127–30. Other passages in Emerson's journals read as follows:

"The words 'I and mine' constitute ignorance.

"I have now given you a summary account of the sovereigns of the earth.—These, and other kings who with perishable frames have possessed this ever-enduring world, and who, blinded with deceptive notions of individual occupation, have

Who steer the plough, but cannot steer their feet  
 Clear of the grave.

They added ridge to valley, brook to pond,  
 And sighed for all that bounded their domain;  
 "This suits me for a pasture; that's my park;  
 We must have clay, lime, gravel, granite-ledge,  
 And misty lowland, where to go for peat.  
 The land is well,—lies fairly to the south.  
 'T is good, when you have crossed the sea and  
 back,

To find the sitfast acres where you left them."  
 Ah! the hot owner sees not Death, who adds  
 Him to his land, a lump of mould the more.  
 Hear what the Earth says:—

## EARTH-SONG

"Mine and yours;  
 Mine, not yours.  
 Earth endures;  
 Stars abide—  
 Shine down in the old sea;  
 Old are the shores;  
 But where are old men?  
 I who have seen much,  
 Such have I never seen.

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"The lawyer's deed  
 Ran sure,  
 In tail,<sup>493</sup>  
 To them, and to their heirs  
 Who shall succeed,  
 Without fail,  
 Forevermore.

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"Here is the land,  
 Shaggy with wood,  
 With its old valley,  
 Mound and flood.  
 But the heritors?—  
 Fled like the flood's foam.  
 The lawyer, and the laws,  
 And the kingdom,  
 Clean swept herefrom.

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indulged the feeling that suggests 'This earth is mine.—it is my son's,—it belongs to my dynasty,—have all passed away. So many who reigned before them, many who succeeded them, and many who are yet to come, have ceased or will cease to be. Earth laughs, as if smiling with autumnal flowers to behold her kings unable to effect the subjugation of themselves."

The title is a variation of "Maitreya."

<sup>491</sup> The individuals named in the first line were early settlers at Concord, including Peter Bulkeley, an ancestor of Emerson's.

<sup>492</sup> Foolish.

<sup>493</sup> Limitation of ownership, entailment.

"They called me theirs,  
Who so controlled me;  
Yet every one  
Wished to stay, and is gone,  
How am I theirs,  
If they cannot hold me,  
But I hold them?"

When I heard the Earth-song,  
I was no longer brave;  
My avarice cooled  
Like lust in the chill of the grave.

1847

### *Waldeinsamkeit* <sup>494</sup>

I do not count the hours I spend  
In wandering by the sea;  
The forest is my loyal friend,  
Like God it useth me.

In plains that room for shadows make  
Of skirting hills to lie,  
Bound in by streams which give and take  
Their colors from the sky;

Or on the mountain-crest sublime,  
Or down the oaken glade,  
O what have I to do with time?  
For this the day was made.

Cities of mortals woe-begone  
Fantastic care derides,  
But in the serious landscape lone  
Stern benefit abides.

Sheen will tarnish, honey cloy,  
And merry is only a mask of sad,  
But, sober on a fund of joy,  
The woods at heart are glad.

There the great Planter plants  
Of fruitful worlds the grain,  
And with a million spells enchants  
The souls that walk in pain.

<sup>494</sup> The German word adopted for the title and meaning "Forest Solitude" is of no particular significance except that Emerson apparently considered it to have a kindred sound to the feelings for nature that he wished the poem to convey.

It is believed that the poem had its initial inspiration during a visit in the summer of 1857 to Mr. John M. Forbes on the island of Naushon. It seems obvious, however, that the familiar haunts near Concord also supplied some of the imagery and ideas.

Still on the seeds of all he made  
The rose of beauty burns;  
Through times that wear and forms that fade,  
Immortal youth returns.

The black ducks mounting from the lake,  
The pigeon in the pines,  
The bittern's boom, a desert make  
Which no false art refines.

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Down in yon watery nook,  
Where bearded mists divide,  
The gray old gods whom Chaos knew,  
The sires of Nature, hide.

Aloft, in secret veins of air,  
Blows the sweet breath of song,  
O, few to scale those uplands dare,  
Though they to all belong!

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See thou bring not to field or stone  
The fancies found in books;  
Leave authors' eyes, and fetch your own,  
To brave the landscape's looks.

Oblivion here thy wisdom is,  
Thy thrift, the sleep of cares;  
For a proud idleness like this  
Crowns all thy mean affairs.

10

1857

1858

### *Days* <sup>495</sup>

Daughters of Time, the hypocritic Days,  
Muffled and dumb like barefoot dervishes,  
And marching single in an endless file,  
Bring diadems and fagots in their hands.  
To each they offer gifts after his will,

<sup>495</sup> This little poem, regarded by Emerson himself as his best, was judged by Lowell to be "as limpid and complete as a Greek epigram."

In his essay on "Works and Days," Emerson wrote, "The days are ever divine, as to the first Aryans. They come and go like muffled and veiled figures, sent from a distant friendly party; but they say nothing, and if we so not use the gifts they bring, they carry them as silently away."

Concerning the composition of the poem Emerson made this remarkable entry in his *Journals* for 1852:

"I find one state of mind does not remember or conceive of another state. Thus I have written within a twelvemonth verses ('Days') which I do not remember the composition or correction of, and could not write the like to-day, and have only, for proof of their being mine, various external evidences, as the manuscripts in which I find them, and the circumstance that I have sent copies of them to friends, etc. Well, if they had been better, if it had been a noble poem, perhaps it would have only more entirely taken up the ladder into heaven."

Bread, kingdoms, stars, and sky that holds  
them all.

I, in my pleached garden, watched the pomp,  
Forgot my morning wishes, hastily  
Took a few herbs and apples, and the Day  
Turned and departed silent. I, too late,  
Under her solemn fillet saw the scorn.

c. 1852

1857

### *Brahma*<sup>496</sup>

If the red slayer think he slays,  
Or if the slain think he is slain,  
They know not well the subtle ways  
I keep, and pass, and turn again.

Far or forgot to me is near;  
Shadow and sunlight are the same;  
The vanished gods to me appear;  
And one to me are shame and fame.

They reckon ill who leave me out;  
When me they fly, I am the wings;  
I am the doubter and the doubt,  
And I the hymn the Brahmin sings.

The strong gods<sup>497</sup> pine for my abode,  
And pine in vain the sacred Seven;<sup>498</sup>  
But thou, meek lover of the good!

Find me, and turn thy back on heaven.

1856

1857

<sup>496</sup> "This poem," observed J. T. Trowbridge in *My Own Story*, "was more talked about and puzzled over and parodied than any other poem of sixteen lines published within my recollection."

"Brahma," as Professor Frederic I. Carpenter points out, "was developed out of snatches of the ancient Hindu scriptures." Emerson said as much in his essay on Plato: "In all nations there are minds which incline to dwell in the conception of the fundamental Unity. . . . This tendency finds its highest expression in the religious writings of the East, and chiefly in the Indian Scriptures . . ." At another time he spoke of "Brahma" as a "Song of the Soul." Professor Norman Foerster has observed that the poem is both easier and harder than it is commonly regarded: easier because, as Emerson said of people who were puzzled, "If you tell them to say Jehovah instead of Brahma, they will not feel any perplexity," and harder because it requires, for a full understanding, a richer religious and metaphysical background than most people possess. Emerson himself liked the interpretation given to the poem by an unnamed little girl of Concord who declared that she found no difficulty understanding the poem. "It simply means," she said, "God everywhere."

For detailed notes, the student should consult the Centenary Edition of Emerson's *Writings*, IX, 464-67.

<sup>497</sup> The strong gods are Indra, god of the sky and wielder of the thunderbolt; Agni, the god of fire; and Yama, the god of death and judgment. All three were finally to be absorbed in Brahma.

<sup>498</sup> The sacred Seven are the Maharshis, or higher saints.

### *Terminus*<sup>499</sup>

It is time to be old,  
To take in sail:—  
The god of bounds,  
Who sets to seas a shore,  
Came to me in his fatal rounds,  
And said: "No more!  
No farther shoot  
Thy broad ambitious branches, and thy root.  
Fancy departs: no more invent;  
Contract thy firmament

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To compass of a tent.  
There's not enough for this and that,  
Make thy option which of two;  
Economize the failing river,  
Not the less revere the Giver,  
Leave the many and hold the few.  
Timely wise accept the terms,  
Softened the fall with wary foot;  
A little while

Still plan and smile,  
And,—fault<sup>500</sup> of novel germs,—  
Mature the unfallen fruit.

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Curse, if thou wilt, thy sires,  
Bad husbands of their fires,  
Who, when they gave thee breath,  
Failed to bequeath  
The needful sinew stark as once,  
The Baresark marrow to thy bones,  
But left a legacy of ebbing veins,  
Inconstant heat and nerveless reins.—  
Amid the Muses, left thee deaf and dumb  
Amid the gladiators, halt and numb."

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As the bird trinis her to the gale.

<sup>499</sup> Terminus was to the Romans the deity presiding over boundaries and landmarks.

Edward Waldo Emerson relates (in *Writings*, IX, 489-90) his surprise, when his father first read to him this poem in 1866: "No thought of his ageing had ever come to me, and there he sat, with no apparent abatement of bodily vigor, and young in spirit, recognizing with serene acquiescence his failing force; I think he smiled as he read. He recognized, as none of us did, that his working days were nearly done. They lasted about five years longer, although he lived, in comfortable health, yet ten years beyond those of his activity."

<sup>500</sup> In default of.

<sup>501</sup> To the point of the preceding ten lines is Emerson's remark to his brother William in 1838: "All Emersons are slender. There are only two or three sound stocks of that excellent tree." In his *Journals* for 1859 he wrote: "Shall I blame my mother, whitest of women, because she was not a gypsy and gave no swarthy ferocity? Or my father because he came of a lettered race and had no porter's shoulders?"



I trim myself to the storm of time,  
 I man the rudder, reef the sail,  
 Obey the voice at eve obeyed at prime:  
 "Lowly faithful, banish fear,

Right onward drive unharmed;  
 The port, well worth the cruise, is near,  
 And every wave is charmed."<sup>502</sup>  
 1866

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1867

<sup>502</sup> The last lines bear favorable comparison with similar passages in Tennyson's "Crossing the Bar," Lanier's "Surrup-

Cup," Longfellow's "Bells of San Blas," or Cardinal Newman's "Lead, Kindly Light."

## HENRY DAVID THOREAU (1817-1862)

The most distinguished spirit of the Transcendentalist Movement was Emerson. He was the high-priest of self-reliant individualism, saying "This is my charge plain and clear, to act faithfully upon my own faith, to live by it myself, and see what a hearty obedience to it will do." He was also the disciple of nature, leading a back-to-nature movement and counseling men to live in all simplicity, according to the examples and dictates of nature. Compared with Thoreau, however, Emerson was only the theorist; it was reserved for Thoreau to put his mandates into practice. He carried them to their natural and, in some instances, unnatural or extreme conclusions. Brook Farm was a practical application of Emerson's preaching about plain living and high thinking; but while he assisted in the planning of the communal experiment, he himself did not participate actively in the life of Brook Farm. Thoreau, on the other hand, experimented with life at Walden Pond in a very direct way, the difference between his procedure and that at Brook Farm being chiefly that he did it single-handedly instead of cooperatively. From first to last, Emerson urged men to live in Spartan simplicity, but he was himself enamored of the conveniences of housekeeping—too much so, thought his young friend Thoreau, who could see no sense in keeping a servant to do what one could do for oneself, much less seven servants, as Emerson's household at one time harbored, or supported. Emerson also repeatedly instructed men to live close to nature, but he seldom got much closer to nature than to dig abstractedly in his garden or to take a walk around Walden, either alone or in the company of a friend; but Thoreau actually lived for two years and two months in the woods with only the birds and the beasts for his companions. While Emerson had repudiated the church during his young manhood, he supported the church in Concord with his money and kept a pew for his family; Thoreau declared his independence of all visible churches, and not only refused to give his money for their support but religiously stayed away from them, saying, "Men call me a skeptic, but I'm only too conscientious to go

to church." Emerson fulminated against the institution of slavery and ranted at his government for condoning the evils of slavery, but Thoreau actively participated in helping fugitive slaves from stage to stage in the underground railway and went to jail rather than pay taxes in support of a government that carried on what he considered an unjust war with Mexico in order to extend the slave territory. Emerson, of course, had given hostages to fortune and to absolute independence; had the cares of a home and the responsibilities of a family. Thoreau had only himself to look after, and he was most careful to keep it so. He was free to come and go as he pleased, or to lead a one-man secession movement. He declared formally: "I cannot for an instant recognize that political organization as *my* government which is the *slave's* government also." "How does it become a man to behave toward this American government today?" he asked in 1849. "I answer, that he cannot without disgrace be associated with it." "My thoughts are murder to the State, and involuntarily go plotting against her." "I refuse her my allegiance, and express contempt for her courts."

Thoreau was Emerson's junior by fourteen years, and in the beginning he was Emerson's pupil. But it was not long before the zeal of the disciple outran the discretion of the master—in nothing so much as in Thoreau's fixed resolution to front life squarely, reduce it to its simplest elements, and discover what it really had to offer. It was his desire, he said, "to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life," "to drive life into a corner, in order to find out whether it was a mean or a noble thing." "I came into this world," he said, "not chiefly to make this a good place to live in, but to live in it, be it good or bad." And in the prosecution of that purpose, he concluded that he must choose wisely what he had to do and to determine what he must leave undone, for clearly a man "has not everything to do, but something; and because he cannot do *every* thing, it is not necessary that he should do *something* wrong." Accordingly, he deliberately chose, in this process of finding out how a man should live, to reduce life to its

simplest essentials; and that, he was convinced, could best be done by studying intently the primal forms, the basic processes, and the fundamental laws of nature in their archetypal simplicity.

In the prosecution of that aim he cast off all superfluities of life, all artificialities of convention, and betook himself in all humility and earnestness to study the great fountainhead of simplicity and unity—nature herself. He made his boast, not the number of things he had, but the number of things he could afford to do without. So he proceeded, with unusual singleness of purpose, “to live as tenderly and daintily as one would pluck a flower,” to make an art of living, consistently and according to the twin principles of the moral law of spiritual growth and the organic principle of natural development. Thus it is that one finds a remarkable unity of mood and of expression between the life and the writings of Thoreau—between his actions and his thoughts, in his expression of them. Indeed, Thoreau consciously cultivated this identity between the outward and the inward life, saying on one occasion:

My life has been the poem I would have writ,  
But I could not both live and live to utter it.

In the pursuit of this ideal he allowed nothing to interfere or to throw him off his track, least of all the social conventionalities or the amenities of human intercourse. He had important work of his own to do that could not await the pleasure of others, though he insisted that it await his own pleasure. He refused to have his work degenerate into labor, and he never permitted his work to drive him. Like Whitman, he sauntered to his task and did as much of it as it pleased him to do. His demands were few, and a few days' wages served to keep him comfortably for many more. He believed with all his heart that most men foolishly allowed their jobs to enslave them. While men have allowed themselves to “become the tool of their tools,” he was “convinced, both by faith and experience, that to maintain one's self on this earth is not a hardship but a pastime, if we will live simply and wisely,” instead of piling “gewgaws upon the mantel piece.” “Superfluous wealth,” he pointed out, “can buy superfluities only.” “Our life is frittered away by detail.” Too many people come to the end of their days only to discover that instead of having lived, they have spent all of life merely preparing to live. Thoreau wanted to live every day, and that could be done only by choosing between what was important and what was unimportant, lest he waste his time. While most men complained that they had not enough time in which to do what was demanded

of them, Thoreau was seldom troubled by lack of time. Careful choosing between essentials and non-essentials left him so much time that in *Walden* he could say, “Time is but the stream I go a-fishing in.” In *Walden*, too, he set down his motto: “Simplicity, simplicity, simplicity!”

An honest man has hardly need to count more than his ten fingers, or in extreme cases he may add his ten toes, and lump the rest. . . . I say, let your affairs be as two or three, and not a hundred or a thousand; instead of a million count half a dozen, and keep your accounts on your thumb nail. . . . Simplify, simplify. Instead of three meals a day, if it be necessary eat but one; instead of a hundred dishes, five; and reduce other things in proportion. . . .

If we stay at home and mind our business, who will want railroads? We do not ride on the railroad; it rides upon us. . . .

Why should we live with such hurry and waste of life? We are determined to be starved before we are hungry. . . . We have the Saint Vitus' dance, and cannot possibly keep our heads still. . . .

Cultivate poverty like a garden herb, like sage. Do not trouble yourself much to get new things, whether clothes or friends. Turn the old; return to them. Things do not change; we change. Sell your clothes and keep your thoughts. God will see that you do not want society. If I were confined to a corner of a garret all my days, like a spider, the world would be just as large to me while I had my thoughts about me. . . . Money is not required to buy one necessary of the soul.

Living simply and renouncing all luxuries as excrescences, he was free to cultivate his individualistic independence. “I would rather sit on a pumpkin and have it all to myself, than be crowded on a velvet cushion.” And as for being kept from what was really important to him by the demands of making his livelihood, he could say, “It is not necessary that a man should earn his living by the sweat of his brow, unless he sweats easier than I do.” He insisted that “the order of things ought to be reversed. The seventh should be man's day of toil; he should keep the other six for his joy and wonder.”

Henry David Thoreau, the only one of the Concord writers who was a native of the village, was born there on July 12, 1817, the second son of John and Cynthia Dunbar Thoreau, of French descent. His father set up a pencil factory in Concord in 1823 and built up a profitable business. Henry received a good preparatory education, including a solid foundation in the classics, and proceeded to Harvard College in 1833, where he graduated in 1837. He earned part of his expenses by tutoring during the year and by teaching or peddling during the vacation periods. Like Emerson, he studied more on his own initiative

than on the prescription of his professors, confessing that though he was for four years "a member of Harvard University," his heart and soul were "far away among the scenes of my boyhood," and that "those hours that should have been devoted to study have been spent in scouring the woods and exploring the lakes and streams of my native village." The story that he refused the bachelor's degree at the end of his four years saying, "Let the sheep keep their skins," is now known to be apocryphal, as are so many other colorful stories about Thoreau that are still current; but it was the kind of remark that he could have made. He did say that he preferred the chic-a-dec-dees to the D.D.'s; and when he heard someone boast that at Harvard they taught all branches of knowledge, he added drily, "Yes, but none of the roots." Education for him was a process of learning, of self-improvement, in which a college or professors could be only supplementary to contributory factors. Already at Harvard he began his intensive program of humanistic self-development, to which end he began, in 1837, his habit of elaborate journal-keeping. In this respect he followed his friend Emerson, and like him, subsequently turned to his journals for the immediate sources of what went into his books, essays, and lectures. In many respects Thoreau was more thorough than Emerson. For instance, he learned his Greek to retain it, and one of his great pleasures in later life was to translate from the Greek classics. Emerson contented himself for the most part with translations. He used encyclopedias, manuals, handbooks, short-cuts to knowledge or information; Thoreau was content with nothing short of the original sources.

Unlike most college graduates of his day, he did not enter professional life, although he taught school intermittently for a few years in Concord with his beloved brother John. However, no occupation held him long. He made pencils for a while in his father's factory, but suddenly he announced that having learned to make a perfect pencil, he was through with pencil-making. He saw no virtue in going on endlessly repeating a process whose possibilities he had already exhausted. There were other things he was ambitious to learn. So he worked at odd jobs for the most part—anything that offered not merely money but also experience. He could wield a hammer and saw expertly, mend fences or umbrellas, sharpen knives or make hay. Ten years after graduation he answered an inquiry from the secretary of his class in these terms:

I don't know whether mine is a profession, or a trade, or what not. . . . I am a Schoolmaster, a private Tutor, a

Surveyor, a Gardener, a Farmer, a Painter (I mean a House Painter), a Carpenter, a Mason, a Day-laborer, a Pencil-maker, a Glass-paper-maker, a Writer, and sometimes a Poetaster.

Surveying his neighbors' lands was his most constant occupation, and he always had more requests for his services than he cared to fulfill. When he worked for pay, he delivered full services, rendered an exact account, and insisted on prompt payment; but he was careful not to engage himself for more labor than was needed to satisfy his financial demands for the moment. He was no disciple of Benjamin Franklin, bent on laying by a comfortable store of money: "Men say a stitch in time saves nine." So, observed Thoreau, "They take a thousand stitches today to save nine tomorrow." The time that he was called upon to devote to the management of his family's pencil-manufacturing business he gave conscientiously but nonetheless grudgingly.

About the time of his graduation Thoreau became intimately acquainted with Emerson, and recognized in him at once a man worth listening to. Emerson, on his side, reciprocated with a warmth of friendship that few people evoked in him. Thoreau became a confirmed transcendentalist, contributed poems, essays, and translations to the *Dial* and assisted Emerson in editing the periodical, and he lived in the Emerson house from 1841 to 1843, when he left for Staten Island, New York, to become the tutor in the family of William Emerson. It was during this period of discipleship that he developed certain Emersonian traits, even to imitating Emerson's manner of writing as well as speaking. The relationship has been over-emphasized by critics like Lowell, who spoke of Thoreau as "the most remarkable . . . among the pistillate plants kindled to fruitage by the Emersonian pollen," while describing him in *A Fable for Critics* as an imitator straining to—

Tread in Emerson's tracks with legs painfully short.  
How he jumps, how he strains, and gets red in the face,  
To keep step with the mystagogue's natural pace!

As Thoreau's own personality and genius developed, he soon went beyond his mentor in such important particulars as his practice of individualism and his glorification of nature; and during the fifties there developed a coolness between them. It was not an open hostility; it was rather an unspoken mutual criticism, each of the other. Thoreau thought his friend too stiff and conventional, too ready to come to terms with the world, too much given to winning fame, gaining success, and wielding influence. He complained that he lacked friends who could wear

a patch over the knee or trundle a wheelbarrow through the streets because they feared they would be out of character. He believed that men should develop a comprehensive character and rise above conventionalities; and with an eye on his respectable neighbor, he said, "It would be easier for them to hobble to town with a broken leg than a broken pantaloons." Emerson, for his part, complained that his young friend lacked ambition—that instead of putting his gifts to good use by "engineering for all America," he was content to be "the captain of a huckleberry-party." Moreover, there was, said Emerson, "somewhat military in his nature" that "wanted a fallacy to expose, a blunder to pillory"—that "required a little sense of victory, a roll of the drum." He delighted in opposition. He was a born protestant. "It cost him nothing to say No," said Emerson; "indeed he found it much easier than to say Yes. It seemed as if his first instinct on hearing a proposition was to controvert it, so impatient was he of the limitations of our daily thought. This habit, of course, is a little chilling to the social affections; and though the companion would in the end acquit him of any malice or untruth, yet it mars conversation." Emerson agreed with their mutual friend, Elizabeth Hoar, who said, "I love Henry, but I cannot like him; and as for taking his arm, I should as soon think of taking the arm of an elm tree." It was the same thing that Hawthorne had noticed. In 1848 he described Thoreau to Longfellow as a man "well worth knowing," a man "of thought and originality," but with "a certain iron-pokerishness, an uncompromising stiffness in his mental character," which, he added, might be "interesting" on occasions but "grows rather wearisome on close and frequent acquaintance." So Emerson observed:

If I knew only Thoreau, I should think coöperation of good men impossible. Must we always talk for victory and never once for truth, for comfort, and joy? . . . Always some weary captious paradox to fight for you, and the time and temper wasted.

Sensing a loss of the perfect accord that had once existed between himself and Emerson, Thoreau wrote in his journal for May 24, 1853, very much in the same vein:

Talked, or tried to talk, with R. W. E. Lost my time—nay, almost my identity. He, assuming a false opposition where there was no difference of opinion, talked to the wind—told me what I knew—and I lost my time trying to imagine myself somebody else to oppose him.

There was never an open break between them. They were, and remained, together on essentials; but

each went his own way in particulars. This relationship between Emerson and Thoreau is typical of the general relationship among New England Transcendentalists, one to the other. They were all individualists—some more than others—but all individuals. The movement included too many people, each pursuing the bent of his own genius. A cooperative movement, like the Brook Farm Association, was destined to fail sooner or later. Emerson, for example, found all his risibilities quickening even at the word *association*; Thoreau felt that he would rather "keep a bachelor's hall in hell than go to board in heaven"; and Alcott's community at Fruitlands, as Emerson observed, "had only room for one."

With all his "iron-pokerishness," Thoreau was a man of tender feelings and fine sensitivity, nor was he devoid of the family affections, as has been charged. It is true that he never married, but not because he never loved a woman. There were several women in his life for whom he had a romantic attachment, notably Ellen Sewall of Scituate. But when he discovered that his favorite brother John was also in love with her, he quietly withdrew in his favor.

It was with this brother that he made a boat trip up the Concord and Merrimack Rivers and back to Concord in 1839—an excursion of ten days, which furnished many of the materials for his first book, *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*, published ten years after the trip. It was the writing of this book which specifically prompted his decision in 1845 to build himself a cabin on some land owned by Emerson on the shore of Walden Pond. He needed a place where he could cogitate and write without interruption, and cabin life seemed ideally suited to the purpose. Besides this immediate object, he had, of course, the larger desire to put his theories of plain, simple living to the test—to see whether Carlyle had been right in saying that it was as easy to reach unity by deliberately reducing the denominator life's fraction as by constantly striving to increase the numerator. Thoreau took great pains to say what has been too often overlooked by his critics, namely, that the experiment was a personal one, and that he cared not in the least whether anyone followed his example. Indeed, he said pointedly that he did not recommend it to any but such as had a genius for it. He did not set out to prove that a hermit's life is better than social life. Bent solely on self-development, he was less interested even than was Emerson in reforming his fellow men. He did not allow the burdens of the world to rest very heavily on his shoulders; he had enough burdens of his own to remove. So he was not ambitious to remake the

world. "I never assisted the sun materially in his rising," he said; "It was of the last importance only to be present at it." It was his purpose, for himself alone, "to improve the nick of time, and notch it on my stick too; to stand on the meeting of the eternities, the past and the future, which is precisely the present moment; to toe the line." If the experiment sufficed for him, that was all he required of it.

Indeed, he had no genius for philanthropy. "As for doing good, that is one of the professions which are full. Moreover, I have tried it fairly, and, strange as it may seem, am satisfied that it does not agree with my constitution. . . . What good I do, in the common sense of that word, must be aside from my main path, and for the most part wholly unintended." Philanthropy, he said, was bred of the stomach-ache, and he would have none of it. He wanted to leave others severely alone to pursue their proper way to heaven, as he wanted them to leave him alone. "If I knew for a certainty," he said in *Walden*, "that a man was coming to my house with the conscious desire to do me good, I should run for my life."

Like Emerson, he had a genius for trusting himself and going his own way, heedless of tradition or authority. In *Walden* he wrote, "I have lived some thirty years on this planet, and I have yet to hear the first syllable of valuable or even earnest advice from my seniors. They have told me nothing, and probably cannot tell me any thing, to the purpose. . . . The greater part of what my neighbors call good I believe in my soul to be bad, and if I repent of any thing, it is very likely to be my good behavior." Living thus, after his own plan and purpose, preferring truth to love, or money, or fame, and bearing constantly in mind that "goodness is the only investment that never fails," he could write during his last illness, "I suppose that I have not many months to live; but, of course, I know nothing about it. I may add that I am enjoying existence as much as ever, and regret nothing." When he was asked whether he had made his peace with God, he replied that he was not aware that he had ever quarreled with God; when Parker Pillsbury approached him on his deathbed about preparing himself for Heaven, Thoreau said, "If you don't mind, Mr. Pillsbury, one world at a time"; while Sam Staples, the constable who had once jailed him, and who was later to become his rod man, reported that he "never saw a man dying with so much pleasure and peace."

Thoreau's career as a lecturer, begun in 1838, gave him some local prominence, especially as the struggle over slavery advanced, and Thoreau's unflinching

stand drew the spotlight. The most notable of his pronouncements inspired by the conflict over human liberty is his essay on "Civil Disobedience," originally published in 1849 as "Resistance to Civil Government" in Elizabeth Palmer Peabody's short-lived *Aesthetic Papers*. His lecture on "John Brown" is hardly less famous—a masterpiece of indignation and invective.

After *A Week*, he published only one other book during his lifetime—*Walden*, in 1854. Following his death in 1862, at the age of forty-five, there appeared a volume of essays collected from the magazines and called *Excursions* (1863), and Emerson prepared for the press *The Maine Woods* and *Cape Cod*, both in 1864, and *A Yankee in Canada* in 1866. The last three, like Thoreau's first published book, are the products mainly of trips which he had made to the regions named in the titles, although, like *A Week*, they contain not only descriptions and observations, but also Thoreau's thoughts on philosophy, religion, science, economics, and, in addition, they are "a mine of quotations from good authors." None of his volumes are, strictly speaking, books in the sense that they exhibit any close structure of organic organization or development. They are rather a brilliant miscellany of observation and experience, meditation and wisdom.

As a writer, Thoreau had his faults and his virtues. Aside from the originality of his thought, his books have what Emerson called the best merit of strengthening and fortifying the soul. Among his shortcomings are his lack of facility as a poet, a certain provincialism that expressed itself in his observation that he had "traveled a good deal in Concord," looseness of form in the larger structural units, and certain stylistic failings which he himself enumerated as a fondness for "paradox," for the "ingenious" expression, instead of the simple, direct one, "playing with words," "using current phrases and maxims," and "want of conciseness."

His books made no great stir during his lifetime. Of the 1,000 copies of *A Week* that were printed, 75 were given away and 219 were sold. When the publisher needed his storage space, he offered the remaining 706 copies to the author if he would haul them away. This Thoreau did promptly, and afterwards he boasted that he now possessed a library of more than a thousand volumes, over seven hundred of which he had written himself. He published only two volumes before he died; yet he stands today, despite his slender productivity, unqualifiedly as one of the five most challenging of the nineteenth-century American authors—with Hawthorne, Emerson, Mel-

ville, and Whitman. His collected writings number twenty volumes, but of these fourteen are journals, leaving only six so-called works; and fully half of the contents of these are of a "secondary" or "tangential" nature. Only *Walden* and the essays on "Civil Disobedience" and "Life without Principle" are widely known, but they are known well enough to make his place secure.

We are still undecided about which of his several qualities entitle him to the fame which is currently accorded him: whether it is the integrity of his mind, the challenge of his philosophy, the vigor of his idealistic attack upon materialism, the example of his life, or the expression of his ideas. Nor are we quite decided about how to interpret him. The first biographers and critics of Thoreau—Channing, Emerson, and Lowell—found him important as a poet-naturalist. Sanborn's *Life of Thoreau* in 1917 called attention to his stature as a transcendentalist. His critical attitude toward the growing industrialism of the United States and a machine age has given his writings a new urgency in the twentieth century. Questioning the premises of nineteenth-century material progress, he observed that "the most wonderful inventions of modern times" are an "insult" to nature.

Every machine, or particular application, seems a slight outrage against universal laws. How many fine inventions are there which do not clutter the ground? We think that those only succeed which minister to our sensible and animal wants, which bake and brew, wash and warm, or the like. But are those of no account which are patented by fancy and imagination, and succeed so admirably in our dreams that they give the tone to our waking thoughts?

Like Emerson, he charged that as man depends on his watch, he loses the skill to tell time by the sun; that he builds a coach, but loses the use of his feet. Accordingly he objected to the devastations wrought in nature by the railroads, observing that a few ride while many are run over; and he wanted to know, before constructing a telegraph line from Maine to Texas, whether Texas had anything to communicate to Maine. It is interesting to speculate on what he would have said about modern governmental controls and planned economies. Meanwhile, in another part of the world, his attack upon the tyranny of the state has been put to practice by Mahatma Gandhi, who read "Civil Disobedience" in 1907; and today millions of Orientals are motivated by Thoreau's doctrine of passive resistance.

Thoreau has been variously received. His contemporary, Lowell, while raising a dozen objections, found in him "fine translunary things." Robert Louis Stevenson confessed that "this pure, narrow, sunnily-ascetic Thoreau . . . exercised a great charm" on him. Whittier considered *Walden* "capital reading, but very wicked and heathenish"; and Ludwig Lewisohn, admitting Thoreau's "singular excellence" as a prose-stylist, felt that he "left no complete book behind him," and called him at once "one of the bravest men that ever lived, but also a clammy prig." He is read today as he never was during his own lifetime; and it would seem that whatever the time or place, he will have his readers, who, whether they praise or blame him, will find his thoughts challenging.

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FROM

*Thoreau's Journal*<sup>1</sup>

## [The Spirit of Adventure]

The world is a fit theatre to-day in which any part may be acted. There is this moment proposed to me every kind of life that men lead anywhere, or that imagination can paint. By another spring I may be a mail-carrier in Peru, or a South African planter, or a Siberian exile, or a Greenland whaler, or a settler on the Columbia River, or a Canton merchant, or a soldier in Florida, or a mackerel-fisher off Cape 10 Sable, or a Robinson Crusoe in the Pacific, or a silent navigator of any sea. So wide is the choice of parts, what a pity if the part of Hamlet be left out!

I am freer than any planet; no complaint reaches round the world. I can move away from public opinion, from government, from religion, from education, from society. Shall I be reckoned a ratable poll in the county of Middlesex, or be rated at one spear under the palm trees of Guinea? Shall I raise corn and 20 potatoes in Massachusetts, or figs and olives in Asia Minor? sit out the day in my office in State Street, or ride it out on the steppes of Tartary? For my Brobdingnag I may sail to Patagonia; for my Lilliput,<sup>2</sup> to Lapland. In Arabia and Persia, my day's adventures may surpass the Arabian Nights' Entertainments. I may be a logger on the head waters of the Penobscot, to be recorded in fable hereafter as an amphibious river-god, by as sounding a name as Triton or Proteus;

<sup>1</sup> Thoreau's *Journal*, comprising the last fourteen of the twenty volumes of his collected *Writings*, in the Walden Edition, begins with an entry for October 22, 1837, and ends on November 3, 1861. Even more than in the case of Emerson, readers of Thoreau have found the reading of his *Journal* as interesting as his published "works."

<sup>2</sup> Brobdingnag and Lilliput are imaginary lands visited by Gulliver in Swift's story of *Gulliver's Travels*.

carry furs from Nootka<sup>3</sup> to China, and so be more renowned than Jason and his golden fleece; or go on a South Sea exploring expedition, to be hereafter recounted along with the periplus of Hanno,<sup>4</sup> I may repeat the adventures of Marco Polo or Mandeville.

These are but few of my chances, and how many more things may I do with which there are none to be compared!

Thank Fortune, we are not rooted to the soil, and here is not all the world. The buckeye does not grow in New England; the mockingbird is rarely heard here. Why not keep pace with the day, and not allow of a sunset nor fall behind the summer and the migration of birds? Shall we not compete with the buffalo, who keeps pace with the seasons, cropping the pastures of the Colorado till a greener and sweeter grass awaits him by the Yellowstone? The wild goose is more a cosmopolite than we; he breaks his fast in Canada, takes a luncheon in the Susquehanna, and plumes himself for the night in a Louisiana bayou. The pigeon carries an acorn in his crop from the King of Holland's to Mason and Dixon's line. Yet we think if rail fences are pulled down and stone walls set up on our farms, bounds are henceforth set to our lives and our fates decided. If you are chosen town clerk, forsooth, you can't go to Tierra del Fuego<sup>5</sup> this summer.

But what of all this? A man may gather his limbs snugly within the shell of a mammoth squash, with

<sup>3</sup> Nootka is an island and sound near Vancouver Island, B. C.

<sup>4</sup> The Greek word *periplus*, meaning "a sailing around," is a translation of the Phoenician inscription on a tablet reputedly hung in a Carthaginian temple by Hanno (d. 480 B.C.), reputed son of Hamilcar, upon his return from a voyage of discovery along the west coast of Africa.

<sup>5</sup> An archipelago at the southern end of South America.



his back to the northeastern boundary, and not be unusually straitened after all. Our limbs, indeed, have room enough, but it is our souls that rust in a corner. Let us migrate interiorly without intermission, and pitch our tent each day nearer the western horizon. The really fertile soils and luxuriant prairies lie on this side the Alleghanies. There has been no Hanno of the affections. Their domain is untravelled ground, to the Mogul's dominions.

(VII, 129-131; *March 21, 1840.*)<sup>6</sup> 10

[Wildness Confessed]

I seem to see somewhat more of my own kith and kin in the lichens on the rocks than in any books. It does seem as if mine were a peculiarly wild nature, which so yearns toward all wildness. I know of no redeeming qualities in me but a sincere love for some things, and when I am reprov'd I have to fall back on to this ground. This is my argument in reserve for all cases. My love is invulnerable. Meet me on that 20 ground, and you will find me strong. When I am condemned, and condemn myself utterly, I think straightway, "But I rely on my love for some things." Therein I am whole and entire. Therein I am God-propped.

(VII, 296; *December 15, 1841.*)

[The Museum a Graveyard]

I hate museums,<sup>7</sup> there is nothing so weighs upon my spirits. They are the catacombs of nature. One 30 green bud of spring, one willow catkin, one faint trill from a migrating sparrow would set the world on its legs again. The life that is in a single green weed is of more worth than all this death. They are dead nature collected by dead men. I know not whether I muse most at the bodies stuffed with cotton and sawdust or those stuffed with bowels and fleshy fibre outside the cases.

Where is the proper herbarium, the true cabinet of shells, and museum of skeletons, but in the 40 meadow where the flower bloomed, by the seaside where the tide cast up the fish, and on the hills and in the valleys where the beast laid down its life and the skeleton of the traveller reposes on the grass? What right have mortals to parade these things on

<sup>6</sup> All references are to the standard Walden Edition of Thoreau's writings.

<sup>7</sup> In this passage Thoreau distinguishes between the purely scientific study of nature and a more spiritual study and interpretation of nature.

their legs again, with their wires, and, when heaven has decreed that they shall return to dust again, to return them to sawdust? Would you have a dried specimen of a world, or a pickled one?

Embalming is a sin against heaven and earth,—against heaven, who has recalled the soul and set free the servile elements, and against the earth, which is thus robbed of her dust. I have had my right-perceiving senses so disturbed in these haunts as to mistake a veritable living man for a stuffed specimen, and surveyed him with dumb wonder as the strangest of the whole collection. For the strangest is that which, being in many particulars most like, is in some essential particular most unlike.

(VII, 464; [1837-47].)

[Wildness]

In literature it is only the wild that attracts us. Dullness is only another name for tameness. It is the untamed, uncivilized, free, and wild thinking in Hamlet, in the Iliad, and in all the scriptures and mythologies that delights us,—not learned in the schools, not refined and polished by art. A truly good book is something as wildly natural and primitive, mysterious and marvellous, ambrosial and fertile, as a fungus or a lichen. Suppose the muskrat or beaver were to turn his views to literature, what fresh views of nature would he present! The fault of our books and other deeds is that they are too humane. I want something speaking in some measure to the condition of muskrats and skunk-cabbage as well as of men,—not merely to a pining and complaining coterie of philanthropists.<sup>8</sup>

(VIII, 97; *November 16, 1850.*)

[Childhood Ecstasy]

Methinks my present experience is nothing; my past experience is all in all. I think that no experience which I have to-day comes up to, or is comparable with, the experiences of my boyhood. And not only this is true, but as far back as I can remember I have unconsciously referred to the experiences of a previous state of existence. "For life is a forgetting,"<sup>9</sup> etc. Formerly, methought, nature developed as I de-

<sup>8</sup> Passages like the preceding explain why John Burroughs could speak of Thoreau as "probably the wildest civilized man this country has produced."

<sup>9</sup> Presumably an adaptation from Wordsworth's line, "Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting," in stanza v of his "Ode on Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood."

veloped, and grew up with me. My life was ecstasy. In youth, before I lost any of my senses, I can remember that I was all alive, and inhabited my body with inexpressible satisfaction; both its weariness and its refreshment were sweet to me. This earth was the most glorious musical instrument, and I was audience to its strains. To have such sweet impressions made on us, such ecstasies begotten of the breezes! I can remember how I was astonished, I said to myself,—I said to others,—“There comes into my mind such <sup>10</sup> an indescribable, infinite, all-absorbing, divine, heavenly pleasure, a sense of elevation and expansion, and [I] have had nought to do with it. I perceive that I am dealt with by superior powers. This is a pleasure, a joy, an existence which I have not procured myself. I speak as a witness on the stand, and tell what I have perceived.” The morning and the evening were sweet to me, and I led a life aloof from society of men. I wondered if a mortal had ever known what I knew. I looked in books for some <sup>20</sup> recognition of a kindred experience, but, strange to say, I found none. Indeed, I was slow to discover that other men had had this experience, for it had been possible to read books and to associate with men on other grounds. The maker of me was improving me. When I detected this interference I was profoundly moved. For years I marched as to a music in comparison with which the military music of the streets is noise and discord. I was daily intoxicated, and yet <sup>30</sup> no man could call me intemperate. With all your science can you tell how it is, and whence it is, that light comes into the soul? <sup>10</sup>

(VIII, 306-307; July 16, 1851.)

[Recollection in Tranquillity]

Our ecstatic states, which appear to yield so little fruit, have this value at least: though in the seasons when our genius reigns we may be powerless for expression, yet, in calmer seasons, when our talent is active, the memory of those rarer moods comes to <sup>40</sup> color our picture and is the permanent paint-pot, as it were, into which we dip our brush. Thus no life or experience goes unreported at last; but if it be not solid gold it is gold-leaf, which gilds the furniture of the mind. It is an experience of infinite beauty on which we unfailingly draw, which enables us to ex-

aggerate ever truly. Our moments of inspiration are not lost though we have no particular poem to show for them; for those experiences have left an indelible impression, and we are ever and anon reminded of them. Their truth subsides, and in cooler moments we can use them as paint to gild and adorn our prose. When I despair to sing them, I will remember that they will furnish me with paint with which to adorn and preserve the works of talent one day. They are like a pot of pure ether. They lend the writer when the moment comes a certain superfluity of wealth, making his expression to overrun and float itself. It is the difference between our river, now parched and dried up, exposing its unsightly and weedy bottom, and the same when, in the spring, it covers all the meads with a chain of placid lakes, reflecting the forests and the skies.

(VIII, 468-469; September 7, 1851.)

[“Dear Native Regions”]

The glorious sandy banks far and near, caving and sliding,—far sandy slopes, the forts of the land,—where you see the naked flesh of New England, her garment being blown aside like that of the priests (of the Levites?) when they ascend to the altar. Seen through this November sky, these sands are dear to me, worth all the gold of California, suggesting Pactolus, while the Saxonville factory-bell sounds o’er the woods. That sound perchance it is that whets my vision. The shore suggests the seashore, and two objects at a distance near the shore look like seals on a sand-bar. Dear to me to lie in, this sand; fit to preserve the bones of a race for thousands of years to come. And this is my home, my native soil; and I am a New-Englander. Of thee, O earth, are my bone and sinew made; to thee, O sun, am I brother. It must be the largest lake in Middlesex. To this dust my body will gladly return as to its origin. Here have I my habitat. I am of thee.

(IX, 95; November 7, 1851.)

[The Woodchuck]

As I turned round the corner of Hubbard’s Grove, saw a woodchuck, the first of the season, in the middle of the field, six or seven rods from the fence which bounds the wood, and twenty rods distant. I ran along the fence and cut him off, or rather overtook him, though he started at the same time. When I was only a rod and a half off, he stopped, and I did

<sup>10</sup> The kinship of Thoreau’s sentiments in these passages to those expressed by Wordsworth in the “Ode” and in “Tintern Abbey” is obvious.

the same; then he ran again, and I ran up within three feet of him, when he stopped again, the fence being between us. I squatted down and surveyed him at my leisure. His eyes were dull black and rather inobvious, with a faint chestnut (?) iris, with but little expression and that more of resignation than of anger. The general aspect was a coarse grayish brown, a sort of grisel (?). A lighter brown next the skin, then black or very dark brown and tipped with whitish rather loosely. The head between a squirrel 10 and a bear, flat on the top and dark brown, and darker still or black on the tip of the nose. The whiskers black, two inches long. The ears very small and roundish, set far back and nearly buried in the fur. Black feet, with long and slender claws for digging. It appeared to tremble, or perchance shivered with cold. When I moved, it gritted its teeth quite loud, sometimes striking the under jaw against the other chatteringly, sometimes grinding one jaw on the other, yet as if more from instinct than anger. 20 Whichever way I turned, that way it headed. I took a twig a foot long and touched its snout, at which it started forward and bit the stick, lessening the distance between us to two feet, and still it held all the ground it gained. I played with it tenderly a while with the stick, trying to open its gritting jaws. Ever its long incisors, two above and two below, were presented. But I thought it would go to sleep if I stayed long enough. It did not sit upright as sometimes, but *standing* on its fore feet with its head down, *i.e.* half 30 sitting, half standing. We sat looking at one another about half an hour, till we began to feel mesmeric influences. When I was tired, I moved away, wishing to see him run, but I could not start him. He would not stir as long as I was looking at him or could see him. I walked round him; he turned as fast and fronted me still. I sat down by his side within a foot. I talked to him *quasi* forest lingo, baby-talk, at any rate in a conciliatory tone, and thought that I had some influence on him. He gritted his teeth less. I 40 chewed checkerberry leaves and presented them to his nose at last without a grit; though I saw that by so much gritting of the teeth he had worn them rapidly and they were covered with a fine white powder, which, if you measured it thus, would have made his anger terrible. He did not mind any noise I might make. With a little stick I lifted one of his paws to examine it, and held it up at pleasure. I turned him over to see what color he was beneath

(darker or more purely brown), though he turned himself back again sooner than I could have wished. His tail was also all brown, though not very dark, rat-tail like, with loose hairs standing out on all sides like a caterpillar brush. He had a rather mild look. I spoke kindly to him. I reached checkerberry leaves to his mouth. I stretched my hands over him, though he turned up his head and still gritted a little. I laid my hand on him, but immediately took it off again, instinct not being wholly overcome. If I had had a few fresh bean leaves, thus in advance of the season, I am sure I should have tamed him completely. It was a frizzly tail. His is a humble terrestrial color like the partridge's, well concealed where dead wiry grass rises above darker brown or chestnut dead leaves,—a modest color. If I had had some food, I should have ended with stroking him at my leisure. Could easily have wrapped him in my handkerchief. He was not fat nor particularly lean. I finally had to leave him without seeing him move from the place. A large, clumsy, burrowing squirrel. *Arctomys*, bear-mouse. I respect him as one of the natives. He lies there, by his color and habits so naturalized amid the dry leaves, the withered grass, and the bushes. A sound nap, too, he has enjoyed in his native fields, the past winter. I think I might learn some wisdom of him. His ancestors have lived here longer than mine. He is more thoroughly acclimated and naturalized than I. Bean leaves the red man raised for him, but he can do without them.

(IX, 420-423; April 16, 1852.)

[Thoreau the Transcendentalist]

The secretary of the Association for the Advancement of Science requests me, as he probably has thousands of others, by a printed circular letter from Washington the other day, to fill the blank against certain questions, among which the most important one was what branch of science I was specially interested in, using the term science in the most comprehensive sense possible. Now, though I could state to a select few that department of human inquiry which engages me, and should be rejoiced at an opportunity to do so, I felt that it would be to make myself the laughing-stock of the scientific community to describe or attempt to describe to them that branch of science which specially interests me, inasmuch as they do not believe in a science which deals with the higher law. So I was obliged to speak to their condi-

tion and describe to them that poor part of me which alone they can understand. The fact is I am a mystic, a transcendentalist, and a natural philosopher to boot. Now I think of it, I should have told them at once that I was a transcendentalist. That would have been the shortest way of telling them that they would not understand my explanations.

(xi, 4; March 5, 1853.)

[Emerson]

P. M.—Talked, or tried to talk, with R. W. E.<sup>10</sup> Lost my time—nay, almost my identity. He, assuming a false opposition where there was no difference of opinion, talked to the wind—told me what I knew—and I lost my time trying to imagine myself somebody else to oppose him.

(xi, 188; May 24, 1853.)

[Faults of Style]

My faults are:—

Paradoxes,—saying just the opposite,—a style which<sup>20</sup> may be imitated.

Ingenious.

Playing with words,—getting the laugh,—not always simple, strong, and broad.

Using current phrases and maxims, when I should speak for myself.

Not always earnest.

"In short," "in fact," "alas!" etc.

Want of conciseness.

(xiii, 7-8; September 2, 1854.)<sup>30</sup>

[Concord vs. Paris]

When it was proposed to me to go abroad, rub off some rust, and *better my condition* in a worldly sense, I fear lest my life will lose some of its homeliness. If these fields and streams and woods, the phenomena of nature here, and the simple occupations of the inhabitants should cease to interest and inspire me, no culture or wealth would atone for the loss. I fear the dissipation that travelling, going into<sup>40</sup> society, even the best, the enjoyment of intellectual luxuries, imply. If Paris is much in your mind, if it is more and more to you, Concord is less and less, and yet it would be a wretched bargain to accept the proudest Paris in exchange for my native village. At best, Paris could only be a school in which to learn to live here, a stepping-stone to Concord, a school in which to fit for this university. I wish so to live ever as

to derive my satisfactions and inspirations from the commonest events, every-day phenomena, so that what my senses hourly perceive, my daily walk, the conversation of my neighbors, may inspire me, and I may dream of no heaven but that which lies about me. A man may acquire a taste for wine or brandy, and so lose his love for water, but should we not pity him?

(xiv, 304; March 11, 1856.)

[A Broken Friendship]

And now another friendship is ended.<sup>11</sup> I do not know what has made my friend doubt me, but I know that in love there is no mistake, and that every estrangement is well founded. But my destiny is not narrowed, but if possible the broader for it. The heavens withdraw and arch themselves higher. I am sensible not only of a moral, but even a grand physical pain, such as gods may feel, about my head and breast, a certain ache and fullness. This rending of a tie, it is not my work nor thine. It is no accident that we mind; it is only the awards of fate that are affecting I know of no æons, or periods, no life and death, but these meetings and separations. My life is like a stream that is suddenly dammed and has no outlet; but it rises the higher up the hills that shut it in, and will become a deep and silent lake. Certainly there is no event comparable for grandeur with the eternal separation—if we may conceive it so—from a being that we have known. I become in a degree sensible of the meaning of finite and infinite. What a grand significance the word "never" acquires! With one with whom we have walked on high ground we cannot deal on any lower ground ever after. We have tried for so many years to put each other to this immortal use, and have failed. Undoubtedly our good genii have mutually found the material unsuitable. We have hitherto paid each other the highest possible compliment; we have recognized each other constantly as divine, have afforded each other that opportunity to live that no other wealth or kindness can afford. And now, for some reason inappreciable by us, it has become necessary for us to withhold this mutual aid. Perchance there is none beside who

<sup>11</sup> This is one of a number of passages in the *Journal* in which Thoreau expresses regret over a misunderstanding or a termination of friendship. Exacting as Thoreau doubtless was in his demands on his friends, a passage like this one indicates that so far from being devoid of a liking for his fellow men, he felt a direct need for close human associations.

knows us for a god, and none whom we know for such. Each man and woman is a veritable god or goddess, but to the mass of their fellows disguised. There is only one in each case who sees through the disguise. That one who does not stand so near to any man as to see the divinity in him is truly alone. I am perfectly sad at parting from you. I could better have the earth taken away from under my feet, than the thought of you from my mind. One while I think that some great injury has been done, with which you are implicated, again that you are no party to it. I fear that there may be incessant tragedies, that one may treat his fellow as a god but receive somewhat less regard from him. I now almost for the first time *fear* this. Yet I believe that in the long run there is no such inequality.

(xv, 249-250; *February 8, 1857.*)

[The Twilight Years]

As the afternoons grow shorter, and the early evening drives us home to complete our chores, we are reminded of the shortness of life, and become more pensive, at least in this twilight of the year. We are prompted to make haste and finish our work before the night comes. I leaned over a rail in the twilight on the Walden road, waiting for the evening mail to be distributed, when such thoughts visited me. I seemed to recognize the November evening as a familiar thing come round again, and yet I could hardly tell whether I had ever known it or only divined it. The November twilights just begun! It appeared like a part of a panorama at which I sat spectator, a part with which I was perfectly familiar just coming into view, and I foresaw how it would look and roll along, and prepared to be pleased. Just such a piece of art merely, though infinitely sweet and grand, did it appear to me, and just as little were any active duties required of me. We are independent on all that we see. The hangman whom I have *seen* cannot hang me. The earth which I have *seen* cannot bury me. Such doubleness and distance does sight prove. Only the rich and such as are troubled with ennui

are implicated in the maze of phenomena. You cannot see anything until you are clear of it. The long railroad causeway through the meadows west of me, the still twilight in which hardly a cricket was heard, the dark bank of clouds in the horizon long after sunset, the villagers crowding to the post-office, and the hastening home to supper by candlelight, had I not seen all this before! What new sweet was I to extract from it? Truly they mean that we shall learn our lesson well. Nature gets thumbled like an old spelling-book. The alms-house and Frederick were still as last November. I was no nearer, methinks, nor further off from my friends. Yet I sat the bench with perfect contentment, unwilling to exchange the familiar vision that was to be unrolled for any treasure or heaven that could be imagined. Sure to keep just so far apart in our orbits still, in obedience to the laws of attraction and repulsion, affording each other only steady but indispensable starlight. It was as if I was promised the greatest novelty the world has ever seen or shall see, though the utmost possible novelty would be the difference between me and myself a year ago. This alone encouraged me, and was my fuel for the approaching winter. That we may behold the panorama with this slight improvement or change, this is what we sustain life for with so much effort from year to year.

And yet there is no more tempting novelty than this new November. No going to Europe or another world is to be named with it. Give me the old familiar walk, post-office and all, with this ever new self, with this infinite expectation and faith, which does not know when it is beaten. We'll go nutting once more. We'll pluck the nut of the world, and crack it in the winter evenings. Theatres and all other sightseeing are puppet-shows in comparison. I will take another walk to the Cliff, another row on the river, another skate on the meadow, be out in the first snow, and associate with the winter birds. Here I am at home. In the bare and bleached crust of the earth I recognize my friend.

(xvii, 273-275; *November 1, 1858.*)

FROM

*A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*

## [Labor and Authorship]

Men have a respect for scholarship and learning greatly out of proportion to the use they commonly serve. We are amused to read how Ben Jonson engaged, that the dull masks with which the royal family and nobility were to be entertained, should be "grounded upon antiquity and solid learning." Can there be any greater reproach than an idle learning? Learn to split wood at least. The necessity of labor 10 and conversation with many men and things, to the scholar is rarely well remembered; steady labor with the hands, which engrosses the attention also, is unquestionably the best method of removing palaver and sentimentality out of one's style, both of speaking and writing. If he has worked hard from morning till night, though he may have grieved that he could not be watching the train of his thoughts during that time, yet the few hasty lines which at evening record his day's experience will be more musical and 20 true than his freest but idle fancy could have furnished. Surely the writer is to address a world of laborers, and such therefore must be his own discipline. He will not idly dance at his work who has wood to cut and cord before night-fall in the short days of winter; but every stroke will be husbanded, and ring soberly through the wood; and so will the strokes of that scholar's pen, which at evening record the story of the day, ring soberly, yet cheerily, on the ear of the reader, long after the echoes of his axe have 30 died away. The scholar may be sure that he writes the tougher truth for the calluses on his palms. They give firmness to the sentence. Indeed, the mind never makes a great and successful effort without a corresponding energy of the body. We are often struck by the force and precision of style to which hard-working men, unpractised in writing, easily attain, when required to make the effort. As if plainness, and vigor, and sincerity, the ornaments of style, were better learned on the farm and in the workshop than 40 in the schools. The sentences written by such rude hands are nervous and tough, like hardened thongs, the sinews of the deer, or the roots of the pine. As for the graces of expression, a great thought is never

found in a mean dress; but though it proceed from the lips of the Woloffs, the nine Muses and the three Graces will have conspired to clothe it in fit phrase. Its education has always been liberal, and its implied wit can endow a college. The scholar might frequently emulate the propriety and emphasis of the farmer's call to his team, and confess that if that were written it would surpass his labored sentences. Whose are the truly *labored* sentences? From the weak and flimsy periods of the politician and literary man, we are glad to turn even to the description of work, the simple record of the month's labor in the farmer's almanac, to restore our tone and spirits. A sentence should read as if its author, had he held a plow instead of a pen, could have drawn a furrow deep and straight to the end. The scholar requires hard and serious labor to give an impetus to his thought. He will learn to grasp the pen firmly so, and wield it gracefully and effectively, as an axe or a sword. When we consider the weak and nerveless periods of some literary men, who perchance in feet and inches come up to the standard of their race, and are not deficient in girth also, we are amazed at the immense sacrifice of thews and sinews. What! these proportions,—these bones,—and this their work! Hands which could have felled an ox have hewed this fragile matter which would not have tasked a lady's fingers! Can this be a stalwart man's work, who has a marrow in his back and a tendon Achilles in his heel? They who set up the blocks of Stonchenge did somewhat, if they only laid out their strength for once, and stretched themselves.

Yet, after all, the truly efficient laborer will not crowd his day with work, but will saunter to his task surrounded by a wide halo of ease and leisure, and then do but what he loves best. He is anxious only about the fruitful kernels of time. Though the hen should sit all day, she could lay only one egg, and, besides, would not have picked up materials for another. Let a man take time enough for the most trivial deed, though it be but the paring of his nails. The buds swell imperceptibly, without hurry or confusion, as if the short spring days were an eternity.—

Then spend an age in whetting thy desire,  
Thou need'st not *hasten* if thou dost *stand fast*.

Some hours seem not to be occasion for any deed, but for resolves to draw breath in. We do not directly go about the execution of the purpose that thrills us, but shut our doors behind us, and ramble with prepared mind, as if the half were already done. Our resolution is taking root or hold on the earth then, as seeds first send a shoot downward which is fed by their own albumen, ere they send one upward to the light.

(Pp. 108-111.)

[Friendship]

Friendship is evanescent in every man's experience, and remembered like heat lighting in past summers. Fair and fitting like a summer cloud:—there is always some vapor in the air, no matter how long the drought; there are even April showers. Surely from time to time, for its vestiges never depart, it floats through our atmosphere. It takes place, like vegetation in so many materials, because there is such a law, but always without permanent form, though ancient and familiar as the sun and moon, and as sure to come again. The heart is forever inexperienced. They silently gather as by magic, these never failing, never quite deceiving visions, like the bright and fleecy clouds in the calmest and clearest days. The Friend is some fair floating isle of palms cluding the mariner in Pacific seas. Many are the dangers to be encountered, equinoctial gales and coral reefs, ere he may sail before the constant trades. But who would not sail through mutiny and storm, even over Atlantic waves, to reach the fabulous retreating shores of some continent man?

(Pp. 277-278.)

[Wayfaring]

We now no longer sailed or floated on the river, but trod the unyielding land like pilgrims. Sadi<sup>12</sup> tells who may travel; among others,—“A common mechanic, who can earn a subsistence by the industry of his hand, and shall not have to stake his reputation for every morsel of bread, as philosophers have said.”—He may travel who can subsist on the wild fruits and game of the most cultivated country. A man may

<sup>12</sup> Sadi, Saadi, or Seyd (1184?-1281), a Persian poet, equally dear to Thoreau and Emerson.

travel fast enough and earn his living on the road. I have frequently been applied to to do work when on a journey; to do tinkering and repair clocks, when I had a knapsack on my back. A man once applied to me to go into a factory, stating conditions and wages, observing that I succeeded in shutting the window of a railroad car in which we were travelling, when the other passengers had failed. “Hast thou not heard of a Sufi,<sup>13</sup> who was hammering some nails into the sole of his sandal; an officer of cavalry took him by the sleeve, saying, come along and shoe my horse.” Farmers have asked me to assist them in haying, when I was passing their fields. A man once applied to me to mend his umbrella, taking me for an umbrella mender, because, being on a journey, I carried an umbrella in my hand while the sun shone. Another wished to buy a tin cup of me, observing that I had one strapped to my belt, and a sauce-pan on my back. The cheapest way to travel, and the way to travel the furthest in the shortest distance, is to go afoot, carrying a dipper, a spoon, and a fish-line, some Indian meal, some salt, and some sugar. When you come to a brook or pond, you can catch fish and cook them; or you can boil a hasty-pudding; or you can buy a loaf of bread at a farmer's house for fourpence, moisten it in the next brook that crosses the road, and dip into it your sugar,—this alone will last you a whole day;—or, if you are accustomed to heartier living, you can buy a quart of milk for two cents, crumb your bread or cold pudding into it, and eat it with your own spoon out of your own dish. Any one of these things I mean, not altogether. I have travelled thus some hundreds of miles without taking any meal in a house, sleeping on the ground when convenient, and found it cheaper, and in many respects more profitable, than staying at home. So that some have inquired why it would not be best to travel always. But I never thought of travelling simply as a means of getting a livelihood. A simple woman down in Tyngsboro', at whose house I once stopped to get a draught of water, when I said, recognizing the bucket, that I had stopped there nine years before for the same purpose, asked if I was not a traveller, supposing that I had been travelling ever since, and had now come round again, that travelling was one of the professions, more or less productive, which her husband did not follow. But continued travelling is far

<sup>13</sup> An adherent of Sufism, a system of Mohammedan mysticism developed especially in Persia.

from productive. It begins with wearing away the soles of the shoes, and making the feet sore, and ere long it will wear a man clean up, after making his heart sore into the bargain. I have observed that the after-life of those who have travelled much is very pathetic. True and sincere travelling is no pastime, but it is as serious as the grave, or any other part of the human journey, and it requires a long probation to be broken into it. I do not speak of those that travel sitting, the sedentary travellers whose legs hang dangling the while, mere idle symbols of the fact, any more than when we speak of sitting hens we mean those that sit standing, but I mean those to whom travelling is life for the legs. The traveller must be born again on the road, and earn a passport from the elements, the principal powers that be for him. He shall experience at last that old threat of his mother fulfilled, that he shall be skinned alive. His sores shall gradually deepen themselves that they may heal inwardly, while he gives no rest to the sole of his foot, and at night weariness must be his pillow, that so he may acquire experience against his rainy days. —So was it with us.

(Pp. 324-326.)

#### [The Essence of Poetry]

Poetry is the mysticism of mankind.

The expressions of the poet cannot be analyzed; his sentence is one word, whose syllables are words. There are indeed no words quite worthy to be set to his music. But what matter if we do not hear the words always, if we hear the music?

Much verse fails of being poetry because it was not written exactly at the right crisis, though it may have been inconceivably near to it. It is only by a miracle that poetry is written at all. It is not recoverable thought, but a hue caught from a vaster receding thought.

A poem is one undivided, unimpeded expression fallen ripe into literature, and it is undividedly and unimpededly received by those for whom it was matured.

If you can speak what you will never hear,—if you can write what you will never read, you have done rare things.

(Pp. 350-351.)

#### [Genius in Poetry]

There are two classes of men called poets. The one

cultivates life, the other art,—one seeks food for nutriment, the other for flavor; one satisfies hunger, the other gratifies the palate. There are two kinds of writing, both great and rare; one that of genius, or the inspired, the other of intellect and taste, in the intervals of inspiration. The former is above criticism, always correct, giving the law to criticism. It vibrates and pulsates with life forever. It is sacred, and to be read with reverence, as the works of nature are studied. There are few instances of a sustained style of this kind; perhaps every man has spoken words, but the speaker is then careless of the record. Such a style removes us out of personal relations with its author, we do not take his words on our lips, but his sense into our hearts. It is the stream of inspiration, which bubbles out, now here, now there, now in this man, now in that. It matters not through what ice-crystals it is seen, now a fountain, now the ocean stream running under ground. It is in Shakspeare, Alpheus,<sup>14</sup> in Burns, Arcthus;<sup>15</sup> but ever the same. —The other is self-possessed and wise. It is reverent of genius, and greedy of inspiration. It is conscious in the highest and the least degree. It consists with the most perfect command of the faculties. It dwells in a repose as of the desert, and objects are as distinct in it as oases or palms in the horizon of sand. The train of thought moves with subdued and measured step, like a caravan. But the pen is only an instrument in its hand, and not instinct with life, like a longer arm. It leaves a thin varnish or glaze over all its work. The works of Goethe furnish remarkable instances of the latter.

There is no just and serene criticism as yet. Nothing is considered simply as it lies in the lap of eternal beauty, but our thoughts, as well as our bodies, must be dressed after the latest fashions. Our taste is too delicate and particular. It says nay to the poet's work, but never yea to his hope. It invites him to adorn his deformities, and not to cast them off by expansion, as the tree its bark. We are a people who live in a bright light, in houses of pearl and porcelain, and drink only light wines, whose teeth are easily set on edge by the least natural sour. If we had been consulted, the backbone of the earth would have been made, not of granite, but of Bristol spar. A modern author would have died in infancy in a ruder age. But

<sup>14</sup> The Peloponnesian river-god.

<sup>15</sup> The wood nymph pursued by Alpheus who was changed by Artemis into a stream which ran under the sea and emerged in Sicily as a fountain, still pursued by the river-god.



the poet is something more than a scald,<sup>16</sup> "a smoother and polisher of language;" he is a Cincinnatus<sup>17</sup> in literature, and occupies no west end of the world. Like the sun, he will indifferently select his rhymes, and with a liberal taste weave into his verse the planet and the stubble.

In these old books the stucco has long since crumbled away, and we read what was sculptured in the granite. They are rude and massive in their proportions, rather than smooth and delicate in their finish. 10 The workers in stone polish only their chimney ornaments, but their pyramids are roughly done. There is

a soberness in a rough aspect, as of unhewn granite, which addresses a depth in us, but a polished surface hits only the ball of the eye. The true finish is the work of time and the use to which a thing is put. The elements are still polishing the pyramids. Art may varnish and gild, but it can do no more. A work of genius is rough-hewn from the first, because it anticipates the lapse of time, and has an ingrained polish, which still appears when fragments are broken off, an essential quality of its substance. Its beauty is at the same time its strength, and it breaks with a lustre.

(Pp. 400-403.)

## *Resistance to Civil Government*<sup>18</sup>

### [*Civil Disobedience*]

I heartily accept the motto,—“That government is best which governs least.”<sup>19</sup> and I should like to see it acted up to more rapidly and systematically. Carried out, it finally amounts to this, which also I believe,—“That government is best which governs not at all;” and when men are prepared for it, that will be the kind of government which they will have. Government is at best but an expedient; but most 20 governments are usually, and all governments are sometimes, inexpedient. The objections which have been brought against a standing army, and they are many and weighty, and deserve to prevail, may also at last be brought against a standing government. The standing army is only an arm of the standing government. The government itself, which is only the mode which the people have chosen to execute their will, is equally liable to be abused and perverted before the people can act through it. Witness the present Mexican war, the work of comparatively a few individuals using the standing government as their tool; for, in the outset, the people would not have consented to this measure.

This American government,—what is it but a tradition, though a recent one, endeavoring to transmit itself unimpaired to posterity, but each instant losing some of its integrity? It has not the vitality

and force of a single living man; for a single man can bend it to his will. It is a sort of wooden gun to the people themselves; and, if ever they should use it in earnest as a real one against each other, it will surely split. But it is not the less necessary for this; for the people must have some complicated machinery or other, and hear its din, to satisfy that idea of government which they have. Governments show thus how successfully men can be imposed on, even impose on themselves, for their own advantage. It is excellent, we must all allow; yet this government never of itself furthered any enterprise, but by the alacrity with which it got out of its way. *It* does not keep the country free. *It* does not settle the West. *It* does not educate. The character inherent in the American people has done all that has been accomplished; and it would have done somewhat more, if the government 30 had not sometimes got in its way. For government is an expedient by which men would fain succeed in letting one another alone; and, as has been said, when it is most expedient, the governed are most let alone by it. Trade and commerce, if they were not made of India rubber, would never manage to bounce over the obstacles which legislators are continually putting in their way; and, if one were to judge these men wholly by the effects of their actions, and not partly by their intentions, they would deserve to be classed and punished with those mischievous persons who put obstructions on the railroads.

But, to speak practically and as a citizen, unlike those who call themselves no-government men, I ask

<sup>16</sup> Or skald, one of the ancient Scandinavian poets.

<sup>17</sup> Lucius Quinctius Cincinnatus (519?-439? B.C.), Roman dictator, a Roman patrician farmer, patriot, and benevolent dictator.

<sup>18</sup> First printed in the *Aesthetic Papers*, edited by Elizabeth P. Peabody, Boston, 1849; subsequently called “Civil Disobedience.”

<sup>19</sup> The Jeffersonian principle of government.

for, not at once no government, but *at once* a better government. Let every man make known what kind of government would command his respect, and that will be one step toward obtaining it.

After all, the practical reason why, when the power is once in the hands of the people, a majority are permitted, and for a long period continue, to rule, is not because they are most likely to be in the right, nor because this seems fairest to the minority, but because they are physically the strongest. But a gov-<sup>10</sup>ernment in which the majority rule in all cases cannot be based on justice, even as far as men understand it. Can there not be a government in which majorities do not virtually decide right and wrong, but conscience?—in which majorities decide only those questions to which the rule of expediency is applicable? Must the citizen ever for a moment, or in the least degree, resign his conscience to the legislator? Why has every man a conscience, then? I think that we should be men first, and subjects afterward.<sup>20</sup> It is not desirable to cultivate a respect for the law, so much as for the right. The only obligation which I have a right to assume, is to do at any time what I think right. It is truly enough said, that a corporation has no conscience; but a corporation of conscientious men is a corporation *with* a conscience. Law never made men a whit more just; and, by means of their respect for it, even the well-disposed are daily made the agents of injustice. A common and natural result of an undue respect for law is, that you may see a<sup>30</sup> file of soldiers, colonel, captain, corporal, privates, powder-monkeys and all, marching in admirable order over hill and dale to the wars, against their wills, aye, against their common sense and consciences, which makes it very steep marching indeed, and produces a palpitation of the heart. They have no doubt that it is a damnable business in which they are concerned; they are all peaceably inclined. Now, what are they? Men at all? or small moveable forts and magazines, at the service of some unscrupulous man in power?<sup>40</sup> Visit the Navy Yard,<sup>20</sup> and behold a marine, such a man as an American government can make, or such as it can make a man with its black arts, a mere shadow and reminiscence of humanity, a man laid out alive and standing, and already, as one may say, buried under arms with funeral accompaniments, though it may be

<sup>20</sup> The Navy Yard at Charlestown, now incorporated in Boston.

Not a drum was heard, not a funeral note,  
As his corse to the ramparts we hurried;  
Not a soldier discharged his farewell shot  
O'er the grave where our hero we buried.<sup>21</sup>

The mass of men serve the State thus, not as men mainly, but as machines, with their bodies. They are the standing army, and the militia, jailers, constables, *posse comitatus*,<sup>22</sup> &c. In most cases there is no free exercise whatever of the judgment or of the moral sense; but they put themselves on a level with wood and earth and stones; and wooden men can perhaps be manufactured that will serve the purpose as well. Such command no more respect than men of straw, or a lump of dirt. They have the same sort of worth only as horses and dogs. Yet such as these even are commonly esteemed good citizens. Others, as most legislators, politicians, lawyers, ministers, and office-holders, serve the State chiefly with their heads; and, as they rarely make any moral distinctions, they are as likely to serve the devil, without intending it, as God. A very few, as heroes, patriots, martyrs, reformers in the great sense, and *men*, serve the State with their consciences also, and so necessarily resist it for the most part; and they are commonly treated by it as enemies. A wise man will only be useful as a man, and will not submit to be "clay," and "stop a hole to keep the wind away,"<sup>23</sup> but leave that office to his dust at least:—

I am too high-born to be propertied,  
To be a secondary at control,  
Or useful serving-man and instrument  
To any sovereign state throughout the world.<sup>24</sup>

He who gives himself entirely to his fellow-men appears to them useless and selfish; but he who gives himself partially to them is pronounced a benefactor and philanthropist.

How does it become a man to behave toward this American government<sup>25</sup> to-day? I answer that he cannot without disgrace be associated with it. I can not for an instant recognize that political organization as *my* government which is the *slave's* government also.

All men recognize the right of revolution; that is,

<sup>21</sup> Quoted from "The Burial of Sir John Moore," by Charles Wolfe (1791-1823), one of Thoreau's favorite poems.

<sup>22</sup> A sheriff's posse.

<sup>23</sup> See *Hamlet*, V, i, 236-37.

<sup>24</sup> From *King John*, V, ii, 79-82.

<sup>25</sup> That is, the administration during 1845-49 of James K. Polk (1795-1849).

the right to refuse allegiance to and to resist the government, when its tyranny or its inefficiency are great and unendurable. But almost all say that such is not the case now. But such was the case, they think, in the Revolution of '75. If one were to tell me that this was a bad government because it taxed certain foreign commodities brought to its ports, it is most probable that I should not make an ado about it, for I can do without them: all machines have their friction; and possibly this does enough good to 10 counterbalance the evil. At any rate, it is a great evil to make a stir about it. But when the friction comes to have its machine, and oppression and robbery are organized, I say, let us not have such a machine any longer. In other words, when a sixth of the population of a nation which has undertaken to be the refuge of liberty are slaves, and a whole country is unjustly overrun and conquered by a foreign army, and subjected to military law, I think that it is not too soon for honest men to rebel and revolutionize. 20 What makes this duty the more urgent is the fact, that the country so overrun is not our own, but ours is the invading army.<sup>26</sup>

Paley,<sup>27</sup> a common authority with many on moral questions, in his chapter on the "Duty of Submission to Civil Government," resolves all civil obligation into expediency; and he proceeds to say, "that so long as the interest of the whole society requires it, that is, so long as the established government cannot be resisted or changed without public inconveniency, it 30 is the will of God that the established government be obeyed, and no longer."—"This principle being admitted, the justice of every particular case of resistance is reduced to a computation of the quantity of the danger and grievance on the one side, and of the probability and expense of redressing it on the other." Of this, he says, every man shall judge for himself. But Paley appears never to have contemplated those cases to which the rule of expediency does not apply, in which a people, as well as an indi- 40 vidual, must do justice, cost what it may. If I have unjustly wrested a plank from a drowning man, I must restore it to him though I drown myself. This, according to Paley, would be inconvenient. But he

<sup>26</sup> Thoreau, like Emerson and Lowell (see Lowell's *Biglow Papers: First Series*), objected to the Mexican War of 1846-48 as designed to extend slavery.

<sup>27</sup> William Paley (1743-1805), English moral philosopher, whose *Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy* was published in 1785. The quotations which follow are from the London edition of 1793, vol. II, p. 142.

that would save his life, in such a case, shall lose it.<sup>28</sup> This people must cease to hold slaves, and to make war on Mexico, though it cost them their existence as a people.

In their practice, nations agree with Paley; but does any one think that Massachusetts does exactly what is right at the present crisis?

A drab of state, a cloth-o'-silver slut,  
To have her train borne up, and her soul trail in the dirt.

Practically speaking, the opponents to a reform in Massachusetts are not a hundred thousand politicians at the South, but a hundred thousand merchants and farmers here, who are more interested in commerce and agriculture than they are in humanity, and are not prepared to do justice to the slave and to Mexico, *cost what it may*. I quarrel not with far-off foes, but with those who, near at home, co-operate with, and do the bidding of those far away, and without whom the latter would be harmless. We are accustomed to say, that the mass of men are unprepared; but improvement is slow, because the few are not materially wiser or better than the many. It is not so important that many should be as good as you, as that there be some absolute goodness somewhere; for that will leaven the whole lump.<sup>29</sup> There are thousands who are *in opinion* opposed to slavery and to the war, who yet in effect do nothing to put an end to them; who, esteeming themselves children of Washington and Franklin, sit down with their hands in their pockets, and say that they know not what to do, and do nothing; who even postpone the question of freedom to the question of free-trade, and quietly read the prices-current along with the latest advices from Mexico, after dinner, and, it may be, fall asleep over them both. What is the price-current of an honest man and patriot to-day? They hesitate, and they regret, and sometimes they petition; but they do nothing in earnest and with effect. They will wait, well disposed, for others to remedy the evil, that they may no longer have it to regret. At most, they give only a cheap vote, and a feeble countenance and God-speed, to the right, as it goes by them. There are nine hundred and ninety-nine patrons of virtue to one virtuous man; but it is easier to deal with the real possessor of a thing than with the temporary guardian of it.

<sup>28</sup> Compare Matthew 10:39.

<sup>29</sup> See I Corinthians 5:6.

All voting is a sort of gaming, like chequers or backgammon, with a slight moral tinge to it, a playing with right and wrong, with moral questions; and betting naturally accompanies it. The character of the voters is not staked. I cast my vote, perchance, as I think right; but I am not vitally concerned that that right should prevail. I am willing to leave it to the majority. Its obligation, therefore, never exceeds that of expediency. Even voting for the right is doing nothing for it. It is only expressing to men feebly 10 your desire that it should prevail. A wise man will not leave the right to the mercy of chance, nor wish it to prevail through the power of the majority. There is but little virtue in the action of masses of men. When the majority shall at length vote for the abolition of slavery, it will be because they are indifferent to slavery, or because there is but little slavery left to be abolished by their vote. *They* will then be the only slaves. Only *his* vote can hasten the abolition of slavery who asserts his own freedom by his vote. 20

I hear of a convention<sup>30</sup> to be held at Baltimore, or elsewhere, for the selection of a candidate for the Presidency, made up chiefly of editors, and men who are politicians by profession; but I think, what is it to any independent, intelligent, and respectable man what decision they may come to, shall we not have the advantage of his wisdom and honesty, nevertheless? Can we not count upon some independent votes? Are there not many individuals in the country who do not attend conventions? But no: I find that 30 the respectable man, so called, has immediately drifted from his position, and despairs of his country, when his country has more reason to despair of him. He forthwith adopts one of the candidates thus selected as the only *available* one, thus proving that he is himself *available* for any purposes of the demagogue. His vote is of no more worth than that of any unprincipled foreigner or hireling native, who may have been bought. Oh for a man who is a *man*, and, as my neighbor says, has a bone in his back which 40 you cannot pass your hand through! Our statistics are at fault: the population has been returned too large. How many *men* are there to a square thousand miles in this country? Hardly one. Does not America offer any inducement for men to settle here? The American has dwindled into an Odd Fellow,<sup>31</sup>—one who

may be known by the development of his organ of gregariousness, and a manifest lack of intellect and cheerful self-reliance; whose first and chief concern, on coming into the world, is to see that the almshouses are in good repair; and, before yet he has lawfully donned the virile garb,<sup>32</sup> to collect a fund for the support of the widows and orphans that may be; who, in short, ventures to live only by the aid of the mutual insurance company, which has promised to bury him decently.

It is not a man's duty, as a matter of course, to devote himself to the eradication of any, even the most enormous wrong; he may still properly have other concerns to engage him; but it is his duty, at least, to wash his hands of it, and, if he gives it no thought longer, not to give it practically his support. If I devote myself to other pursuits and contemplations, I must first see, at least, that I do not pursue them sitting upon another man's shoulders. I must get off him first, that he may pursue his contemplations too. See what gross inconsistency is tolerated. I have heard some of my townsmen say, "I should like to have them order me out to help put down an insurrection of the slaves, or to march to Mexico,—see if I would go;" and yet these very men have each, directly by their allegiance, and so indirectly, at least, by their money, furnished a substitute. The soldier is applauded who refuses to serve in an unjust war by those who do not refuse to sustain the unjust government which makes the war; is applauded by those whose own act and authority he disregards and sets at naught; as if the State were penitent to that degree that it hired one to scourge it while it sinned, but not to that degree that it left off sinning for a moment. Thus, under the name of order and civil government, we are all made at last to pay homage to and support our own meanness. After the first blush of sin, comes its indifference; and from immoral it becomes, as it were, *unnmoral*, and not quite unnecessary to that life which we have made.

The broadest and most prevalent error requires the most disinterested virtue to sustain it. The slight reproach to which the virtue of patriotism is commonly liable, the noble are most likely to incur. Those who, while they disapprove of the character and measures of a government, yield to it their allegiance and support, are undoubtedly its most conscientious sup-

<sup>30</sup> Doubtless the Democratic convention of 1848.

<sup>31</sup> An oblique reference to the Independent Order of Odd Fellows, the American branch of which was founded in 1806.

<sup>32</sup> Thoreau's humorous reference to the *toga virilis*, which the Roman boy donned as he approached man's estate.

porters, and so frequently the most serious obstacles to reform. Some are petitioning the State to dissolve the Union, to disregard the requisitions of the President.<sup>33</sup> Why do they not dissolve it themselves,—the union between themselves and the State,—and refuse to pay their quota into its treasury? Do not they stand in the same relation to the State, that the State does to the Union? And have not the same reasons prevented the State from resisting the Union, which have prevented them from resisting the State?

How can a man be satisfied to entertain an opinion merely, and enjoy it? Is there any enjoyment in it, if his opinion is that he is aggrieved? If you are cheated out of a single dollar by your neighbor, you do not rest satisfied with knowing that you are cheated, or with saying that you are cheated, or even with petitioning him to pay you your due; but you take effectual steps at once to obtain the full amount, and see that you are never cheated again. Action from principle,—the perception and the performance of <sup>20</sup> right,—changes things and relations; it is essentially revolutionary, and does not consist wholly with any thing which was. It not only divides states and churches, it divides families; aye, it divides the *individual*, separating the diabolical in him from the divine.

Unjust laws exist: shall we be content to obey them, or shall we endeavor to amend them, and obey them until we have succeeded, or shall we transgress them at once? Men generally, under such a govern- <sup>30</sup> ment as this, think that they ought to wait until they have persuaded the majority to alter them. They think that, if they should resist, the remedy would be worse than the evil. But it is the fault of the government itself that the remedy is worse than the evil. *It* makes it worse. Why is it not more apt to anticipate and provide for reform? Why does it not cherish its wise minority? Why does it cry and resist before it is hurt? Why does it not encourage its citizens to be on the alert to point out its faults, and *do* better than it <sup>40</sup> would have them? Why does it always crucify Christ, and excommunicate Copernicus and Luther,<sup>34</sup> and pronounce Washington and Franklin rebels?

One would think, that a deliberate and practical denial of its authority, was the only offence never contemplated by government; else, why has it not

assigned its definite, its suitable and proportionate penalty? If a man who has no property refuses but once to earn nine shillings for the State, he is put in prison for a period unlimited by any law that I know, and determined only by the discretion of those who placed him there; but if he should steal ninety times nine shillings from the State, he is soon permitted to go at large again.

If the injustice is part of the necessary friction of <sup>10</sup> the machine of government, let it go: perchance it will wear smooth,—certainly the machine will wear out. If the injustice has a spring, or a pulley, or a rope, or a crank, exclusively for itself, then perhaps you may consider whether the remedy will not be worse than the evil; but if it is of such a nature that it requires you to be the agent of injustice to another, then, I say, break the law. Let your life be a counter friction to stop the machine. What I have to do is to see, at any rate, that I do not lend myself to the wrong which I condemn.

As for adopting the ways which the State has provided for remedying the evil, I know not of such ways. They take too much time, and a man's life will be gone. I have other affairs to attend to. I came into this world, not chiefly to make this a good place to live in, but to live in it, be it good or bad. A man has not every thing to do, but something; and because he cannot do *every thing*, it is not necessary that he should do *something* wrong. It is not my business to be petitioning the governor or the legisla- <sup>50</sup> ture any more than it is theirs to petition me; and, if they should not hear my petition, what should I do then? But in this case the State has provided no way: its very Constitution is the evil. This may seem to be harsh and stubborn and unconciliatory; but it is to treat with the utmost kindness and consideration the only spirit that can appreciate or deserves it. So is all change for the better, like birth and death which convulse the body.

I do not hesitate to say, that those who call themselves abolitionists should at once effectually withdraw their support, both in person and property, from the government of Massachusetts, and not wait till they constitute a majority of one, before they suffer the right to prevail through them. I think that it is enough if they have God on their side, without waiting for that other one. Moreover, any man more right than his neighbors, constitutes a majority of one already.

<sup>33</sup> A reference to Polk's call for volunteers for the war against Mexico.

<sup>34</sup> Nicolaus Copernicus (1473-1543) was excommunicated; Martin Luther (1483-1543) was officially condemned in 1520.

I meet this American government, or its representative the State government, directly, and face to face, once a year, no more, in the person of its tax-gatherer; this is the only mode in which a man situated as I am necessarily meets it; and it then says distinctly, Recognize me; and the simplest, the most effectual, and, in the present posture of affairs, the indispensablest mode of treating with it on this head, of expressing your little satisfaction with and love for it, is to deny it then. My civil neighbor, the tax-gatherer, is the very man I have to deal with,—for it is, after all, with men and not with parchment that I quarrel,—and he has voluntarily chosen to be an agent of the government. How shall he ever know well what he is and does as an officer of the government, or as a man, until he is obliged to consider whether he shall treat me, his neighbor, for whom he has respect, as a neighbor and well-disposed man, or as a maniac and disturber of the peace. and see if he can get over this obstruction to his neighborliness without a ruder and more impetuous thought or speech corresponding with his action? I know this well, that if one thousand, if one hundred, if ten men whom I could name,—if ten *honest* men only,—aye, if one HONEST man, in this State of Massachusetts, *ceasing to hold slaves*, were actually to withdraw from this copartnership, and be locked up in the county jail therefor, it would be the abolition of slavery in America.<sup>35</sup> For it matters not how small the beginning may seem to be: what is once well done is done for ever. But we love better to talk about it: that we say is our mission. Reform keeps many scores of newspapers in its service, but not one man. If my esteemed neighbor, the State's ambassador,<sup>36</sup> who will devote his days to the settlement of the question of human rights in the Council Chamber, instead of being threatened with the prisons of Carolina, were to sit down the prisoner of Massachusetts, that State which is so anxious to foist the sin of slavery upon her sister,—though at present she can discover only 40 an act of inhospitality to be the ground of a quarrel with her,—the Legislature would not wholly waive

<sup>35</sup> Mahatma Gandhi's acknowledged indebtedness to Thoreau's principles is understandable in the light of a passage like the preceding which makes the principle of "passive resistance" explicit.

<sup>36</sup> A reference to the official visit of Samuel Hoar of Concord, Massachusetts, to South Carolina to protest against the illegal imprisonment of colored Massachusetts seamen in South Carolina. Hoar escaped without suffering physical violence, but the harsh treatment which he received in Charleston roused resentful indignation in Massachusetts.

the subject the following winter.

Under a government which imprisons any unjustly, the true place for a just man is also a prison. The proper place to-day, the only place which Massachusetts has provided for her freer and less desponding spirits, is in her prisons, to be put out and locked out of the State by her own act, as they have already put themselves out by their principles. It is there that the fugitive slave, and the Mexican prisoner on parole, and the Indian come to plead the wrongs of his race, should find them; on that separate, but more free and honorable ground, where the State places those who are not *with* her but *against* her,—the only house in a slave-state in which a free man can abide with honor. If any think that their influence would be lost there, and their voices no longer afflict the ear of the State, that they would not be as an enemy within its walls, they do not know by how much truth is stronger than error, nor how much more eloquently and effectively he can combat injustice who has experienced a little in his own person. Cast your whole vote, not a strip of paper merely, but your whole influence. A minority is powerless while it conforms to the majority; it is not even a minority then; but it is irresistible when it clogs by its whole weight. If the alternative is to keep all just men in prison, or give up war and slavery, the State will not hesitate which to choose. If a thousand men were not to pay their tax-bills this year, that would not be a violent and bloody measure, as it would be to pay them, and enable the State to commit violence and shed innocent blood. This is, in fact, the definition of a peaceable revolution, if any such is possible. If the tax-gatherer, or any other public officer, asks me, as one has done, "But what shall I do?" my answer is, "If you really wish to do any thing, resign your office." When the subject has refused allegiance, and the officer has resigned his office, then the revolution is accomplished. But even suppose blood should flow. Is there not a sort of blood shed when the conscience is wounded? Through this wound a man's real manhood and immortality flow out, and he bleeds to an everlasting death. I see this blood flowing now.

I have contemplated the imprisonment of the offender, rather than the seizure of his goods,—though both will serve the same purpose,—because they who assert the purest right, and consequently are most dangerous to a corrupt State, commonly have not

spent much time in accumulating property. To such the State renders comparatively small service, and a slight tax is wont to appear exorbitant, particularly if they are obliged to earn it by special labor with their hands. If there were one who lived wholly without the use of money, the State itself would hesitate to demand it of him. But the rich man—not to make any invidious comparison—is always sold to the institution which makes him rich. Absolutely speaking, the more money, the less virtue; for money comes between a man and his objects, and obtains them for him; and it was certainly no great virtue to obtain it. It puts to rest many questions which he would otherwise be taxed to answer; while the only new question which it puts is the hard but superfluous one, how to spend it. Thus his moral ground is taken from under his feet. The opportunities of living are diminished in proportion as what are called the “means” are increased. The best thing a man can do for his culture when he is rich is to endeavour to carry out those schemes which he entertained when he was poor. Christ answered the Herodians according to their condition. “Show me the tribute-money,”<sup>37</sup> said he;—and one took a penny out of his pocket;—If you use money which has the image of Cæsar on it, and which he has made current and valuable, that is, *if you are men of the State*, and gladly enjoy the advantages of Cæsar’s government, then pay him back some of his own when he demands it: “Render therefore to Cæsar that which is Cæsar’s, and to God those things which are God’s,”<sup>38</sup>—leaving them no wiser than before as to which was which; for they did not wish to know.

When I converse with the freest of my neighbors, I perceive that, whatever they may say about the magnitude and seriousness of the question, and their regard for the public tranquillity, the long and the short of the matter is, that they cannot spare the protection of the existing government, and they dread the consequences of disobedience to it to their property and families. For my own part, I should not like to think that I ever rely on the protection of the State. But, if I deny the authority of the State when it presents its tax-bill, it will soon take and waste all my property, and so harass me and my children without end. This is hard. This makes it impossible for a man to live honestly and at the same time com-

fortably in outward respects. It will not be worth the while to accumulate property; that would be sure to go again. You must hire or squat somewhere, and raise but a small crop, and eat that soon. You must live within yourself, and depend upon yourself, always tucked up and ready for a start, and not have many affairs. A man may grow rich in Turkey even, if he will be in all respects a good subject of the Turkish government. Confucius said,—“If a State is governed by the principles of reason, poverty and misery are subjects of shame; if a State is not governed by the principles of reason, riches and honors are the subjects of shame.” No: until I want the protection of Massachusetts to be extended to me in some distant southern port, where my liberty is endangered, or until I am bent solely on building up an estate at home by peaceful enterprise, I can afford to refuse allegiance<sup>39</sup> to Massachusetts, and her right to my property and life. It costs me less in every sense to incur the penalty of disobedience to the State, than it would to obey. I should feel as if I were worth less in that case.

Some years ago, the State met me in behalf of the church, and commanded me to pay a certain sum toward the support of a clergyman whose preaching my father attended, but never I myself. “Pay it,” it said, “or be locked up in the jail.” I declined to pay. But, unfortunately, another man saw fit to pay it. I did not see why the schoolmaster should be taxed to support the priest, and not the priest the schoolmaster; for I was not the State’s schoolmaster, but I supported myself by voluntary subscription. I did not see why the lyceum should not present its tax-bill, and have the State to back its demand, as well as the church. However, at the request of the selectmen, I condescended to make some such statement as this in writing:—“Know all men by these presents, that I, Henry Thoreau, do not wish to be regarded as a member of any incorporated society which I have not joined.” This I gave to the town-clerk; and he has it. The State, having thus learned that I did not wish to be regarded as a member of that church, has never made a like demand on me since; though it said that it must adhere to its original presumption that

<sup>37</sup> See Matthew 22:19–21.

<sup>38</sup> Matthew 22:19–21.

<sup>39</sup> When, in 1838, Thoreau refused to pay taxes for the support of the church, he was not jailed. But in 1845, when he refused to pay his poll tax, Sam Staples, the Concord constable, found it his disagreeable duty to arrest and lock up Thoreau in the town jail. Thoreau relates the story in some detail with a good deal of obvious self-satisfaction.



time. If I had known how to name them, I should then have signed off in detail from all the societies which I never signed on to; but I did not know where to find a complete list.

I have paid no poll-tax for six years. I was put into a jail once <sup>40</sup> on this account, for one night; and, as I stood considering the walls of solid stone, two or three feet thick, the door of wood and iron, a foot thick, and the iron grating which strained the light, I could not help being struck with the foolishness of that institution which treated me as if I were mere flesh and blood and bones, to be locked up. I wondered that it should have concluded at length that this was the best use it could put me to, and had never thought to avail itself of my services in some way. I saw that, if there was a wall of stone between me and my townsmen, there was a still more difficult one to climb or break through, before they could get to be as free as I was. I did not for a moment feel confined, and the walls seemed a great waste of stone and mortar. I felt as if I alone of all my townsmen had paid my tax. They plainly did not know how to treat me, but behaved like persons who are underbred. In every threat and in every compliment there was a blunder; for they thought that my chief desire was to stand the other side of that stone wall. I could not but smile to see how industriously they locked the door on my meditations, which followed them out again without let or hindrance, and *they* were really all that was dangerous. As they could not reach <sup>30</sup> me, they had resolved to punish my body; just as boys, if they cannot come at some person against whom they have a spite, will abuse his dog. I saw that the State was half-witted, that it was timid as a lone woman with her silver spoons, and that it did not know its friends from its foes, and I lost all my remaining respect for it, and pitied it.

Thus the State never intentionally confronts a man's sense, intellectual or moral, but only his body, his senses. It is not armed with superior wit or honesty, but with superior physical strength. I was not born to be forced. I will breathe after my own fashion. Let us see who is the strongest. What force has a multitude? They only can force me who obey a higher law than I. They force me to become like themselves. I do not hear of *men* being forced to

live this way or that by masses of men. What sort of life were that to live? When I meet a government which says to me, "Your money or your life," why should I be in haste to give it my money? It may be in a great strait, and not know what to do: I cannot help that. It must help itself; do as I do. It is not worth the while to snivel about it. I am not responsible for the successful working of the machinery of society. I am not the son of the engineer. I perceive that, when an acorn and a chestnut fall side by side, the one does not remain inert to make way for the other, but both obey their own laws, and spring and grow and flourish as best they can, till one, perchance, overshadows and destroys the other. If a plant cannot live according to its nature, it dies; and so a man.

The night in prison was novel and interesting enough. The prisoners in their shirt-sleeves were enjoying a chat and the evening air in the door-way, when I entered. But the jailer said, "Come, boys, it is time to lock up;" and so they dispersed, and I heard the sound of their steps returning into the hollow apartments. My room-mate was introduced to me by the jailer, as "a first-rate fellow and a clever man." When the door was locked, he showed me where to hang my hat, and how he managed matters there. The rooms were whitewashed once a month; and this one, at least, was the whitest, most simply furnished, and probably the neatest apartment in the town. He naturally wanted to know where I came from, and what brought me there; and, when I had told him, I asked him in my turn how he came there, presuming him to be an honest man, of course; and, as the world goes, I believe he was. "Why," said he, "they accuse me of burning a barn; but I never did it." As near as I could discover, he had probably gone to bed in a barn when drunk, and smoked his pipe there; and so a barn was burnt. He had the reputation of being a clever man, had been there some three months waiting for his trial to come on, and would have to wait as much longer; but he was quite domesticated and contented, since he got his board for nothing, and thought that he was well treated.

He occupied one window, and I the other; and I saw, that if one stayed there long, his principal business would be to look out the window. I had soon read all the tracts that were left there, and examined where former prisoners had broken out, and where a

<sup>40</sup> Two years before, Amos Bronson Alcott had chosen to go to jail rather than pay a poll tax to a government that permitted slavery to exist.



grate had been sawed off, and heard the history of the various occupants of that room; for I found that even here there was a history and a gossip which never circulated beyond the walls of the jail. Probably this is the only house in the town where verses are composed, which are afterward printed in a circular form, but not published. I was shown quite a long list of verses which were composed by some young men who had been detected in an attempt to escape, who avenged themselves by singing them. 10

I pumped my fellow-prisoner as dry as I could, for fear I should never see him again; but at length he showed me which was my bed, and left me to blow out the lamp.

It was like travelling into a far country, such as I had never expected to behold, to lie there for one night. It seemed to me that I never had heard the town-clock strike before, nor the evening sounds of the village; for we slept with the windows open, which were inside the grating. It was to see my native village in the light of the middle ages, and our Concord was turned into a Rhine stream, and visions of knights and castles passed before me. They were the voices of old burghers that I heard in the streets. I was an involuntary spectator and auditor of whatever was done and said in the kitchen of the adjacent village-inn,—a wholly new and rare experience to me. It was a closer view of my native town. I was fairly inside of it. I never had seen its institutions before. This is one of its peculiar institutions; for it is a shire town. I began to comprehend what its inhabitants were about. 20

In the morning, our breakfasts were put through the hole in the door, in small oblong-square tin pans, made to fit, and holding a pint of chocolate, with brown bread, and an iron spoon. When they called for the vessels again, I was green enough to return what bread I had left; but my comrade seized it, and said that I should lay that up for lunch or dinner. Soon after, he was let out to work at haying in a 30 neighboring field, whither he went every day, and would not be back till noon; so he bade me good-day, saying that he doubted if he should see me again.

When I came out of prison,—for some one interfered,<sup>41</sup> and paid the tax,—I did not perceive that great changes had taken place on the common, such

<sup>41</sup> According to family testimony, Thoreau's aunt Maria paid the tax.

as he observed who went in a youth, and emerged a tottering and gray-headed man; and yet a change had to my eyes come over the scene,—the town, and State, and country,—greater than any that mere time could effect. I saw yet more distinctly the State in which I had lived. I saw to what extent the people among whom I lived could be trusted as good neighbors and friends; that their friendship was for summer weather only; that they did not greatly purpose to do right; that they were a distinct race from me by their prejudices and superstitions, as the Chinamen and Malays are; that, in their sacrifices to humanity, they ran no risks, not even to their property; that, after all, they were not so noble but they treated the thief as he had treated them, and hoped, by a certain outward observance and a few prayers, and by walking in a particular straight though useless path from time to time, to save their souls. This may be to judge my neighbors harshly; for I believe that most of them are not aware that they have such an institution as the jail in their village.

It was formerly the custom in our village, when a poor debtor came out of jail, for his acquaintances to salute him, looking through their fingers, which were crossed to represent the grating of a jail window, "How do ye do?" My neighbors did not thus salute me, but first looked at me, and then at one another, as if I had returned from a long journey. I was put into jail as I was going to the shoemaker's to get a shoe which was mended. When I was let out the next morning, I proceeded to finish my errand, and, having put on my mended shoe, joined a huckleberry party, who were impatient to put themselves under my conduct; and in half an hour,—for the horse was soon tackled,—was in the midst of a huckleberry field, on one of our highest hills, two miles off; and then the State was nowhere to be seen.

This is the whole history of "My Prisons." <sup>42</sup>

I have never declined paying the highway tax, because I am as desirous of being a good neighbor as I am of being a bad subject; and, as for supporting schools, I am doing my part to educate my fellow-countrymen now. It is for no particular item in the tax-bill that I refuse to pay it. I simply wish to refuse allegiance to the State, to withdraw and stand aloof

<sup>42</sup> Probably a reference to a book which Thoreau knew, *Le mie prigioni*, by Silvio Pellico (1788–1854), detailing the story of his arrest and imprisonment by the tyrannical Austrian government.

from it effectually. I do not care to trace the course of my dollar, if I could, till it buys a man, or a musket to shoot one with,—the dollar is innocent,—but I am concerned to trace the effects of my allegiance. In fact, I quietly declare war with the State, after my fashion, though I will still make what use and get what advantage of her I can, as is usual in such cases.

If others pay the tax which is demanded of me, from a sympathy with the State, they do but what they have already done in their own case, or rather they abet injustice to a greater extent than the State requires. If they pay the tax from a mistaken interest in the individual taxed, to save his property or prevent his going to jail, it is because they have not considered wisely how far they let their private feelings interfere with the public good.

This, then, is my position at present. But one cannot be too much on his guard in such a case, lest his action be biased by obstinacy, or an undue regard for the opinions of men. Let him see that he does only what belongs to himself and to the hour.

I think sometimes, Why, this people mean well; they are only ignorant; they would do better if they knew how: why give your neighbors this pain to treat you as they are not inclined to? But I think, again, this is no reason why I should do as they do, or permit others to suffer much greater pain of a different kind. Again, I sometimes say to myself, When many millions of men, without heat, without ill-will, without personal feeling of any kind, demand of you a few shillings only, without the possibility, such is their constitution, of retracting or altering their present demand, and without the possibility, on your side, of appeal to any other millions, why expose yourself to this overwhelming brute force? You do not resist cold and hunger, the winds and the waves, thus obstinately; you quietly submit to a thousand similar necessities. You do not put your head into the fire. But just in proportion as I regard this as not wholly a brute force, but partly a human force, and consider that I have relations to those millions as to so many millions of men, and not of mere brute or inanimate things, I see that appeal is possible, first and instantaneously, from them to the Maker of them, and, secondly, from them to themselves. But, if I put my head deliberately into the fire, there is no appeal to fire or to the Maker of fire, and I have only myself to blame. If I could convince myself that I have any

right to be satisfied with men as they are, and to treat them accordingly, and not according, in some respects, to my requisitions and expectations of what they and I ought to be, then, like a good Mussulman and fatalist, I should endeavor to be satisfied with things as they are, and say it is the will of God. And, above all, there is this difference between resisting this and a purely brute or natural force, that I can resist this with some effect; but I cannot expect, like Orpheus, to change the nature of the rocks and trees and beasts.

I do not wish to quarrel with any man or nation. I do not wish to split hairs, to make fine distinctions, or set myself up as better than my neighbors. I seek rather, I may say, even an excuse for conforming to the laws of the land. I am but too ready to conform to them. Indeed I have reason to suspect myself on this head; and each year, as the tax-gatherer comes round, I find myself disposed to review the acts and position of the general and state governments, and the spirit of the people, to discover a pretext for conformity. I believe that the State will soon be able to take all my work of this sort out of my hands, and then I shall be no better a patriot than my fellow-countrymen. Seen from a lower point of view, the Constitution, with all its faults, is very good; the law and the courts are very respectable; even this State and this American government are, in many respects, very admirable and rare things, to be thankful for, such as a great many have described them; but seen from a point of view a little higher, they are what I have described them; seen from a higher still, and the highest, who shall say what they are, or that they are worth looking at or thinking of at all?

However, the government does not concern me much, and I shall bestow the fewest possible thoughts on it. It is not many moments that I live under a government, even in this world. If a man is thought-free, fancy-free, imagination-free, that which is *not* never for a long time appearing *to be* to him, unwise rulers or reformers cannot fatally interrupt him.

I know that most men think differently from myself; but those whose lives are by profession devoted to the study of these or kindred subjects, content me as little as any. Statesmen and legislators, standing so completely within the institution, never distinctly and nakedly behold it. They speak of moving society, but have no resting-place without it. They may be men of a certain experience and discrimination. and

have no doubt invented ingenious and even useful systems, for which we sincerely thank them; but all their wit and usefulness lie within certain not very wide limits. They are wont to forget that the world is not governed by policy and expediency. Webster never goes behind government, and so cannot speak with authority about it. His words are wisdom to those legislators who contemplate no essential reform in the existing government; but for thinkers, and those who legislate for all time, he never once glances at the subject. I know of those whose serene and wise speculation on this theme would soon reveal the limits of his mind's range and hospitality. Yet, compared with the cheap professions of most reformers, and the still cheaper wisdom and eloquence of politicians in general, his are almost the only sensible and valuable words, and we thank Heaven for him. Comparatively, he is always strong, original, and, above all, practical. Still his quality is not wisdom, but prudence. The lawyer's truth is not Truth, but consistency, or a consistent expediency. Truth is always in harmony with herself, and is not concerned chiefly to reveal the justice that may consist with wrong-doing. He well deserves to be called, as he has been called, the Defender of the Constitution. There are really no blows to be given by him but defensive ones. He is not a leader, but a follower. His leaders are the men of '87. "I have never made an effort," he says, "and never propose to make an effort; I have never countenanced an effort, and never mean to countenance an effort, to disturb the arrangement as originally made, by which the various States came into the Union." Still thinking of the sanction which the Constitution gives to slavery, he says, "Because it was a part of the original compact,—let it stand."<sup>43</sup> Notwithstanding his special acuteness and ability, he is unable to take a fact out of its merely political relations, and behold it as it lies absolutely to be disposed of by the intellect,—what, for instance, it behoves a man to do here in America to-day with regard to slavery, but ventures, or is driven, to make some such desperate answer as the following, while professing to speak absolutely, and as a private man, —from which what new and singular code of social duties might be inferred?—"The manner," says he, "in which the government of those States where slavery exists are to regulate it, is for their own con-

sideration, under their responsibility to their constituents, to the general laws of propriety, humanity, and justice, and to God. Associations formed elsewhere, springing from a feeling of humanity, or any other cause, have nothing whatever to do with it. They have never received any encouragement from me, and they never will."<sup>44</sup>

They who know of no purer sources of truth, who have traced up its stream no higher, stand, and wisely stand, by the Bible and the Constitution, and drink at it there with reverence and humility; but they who behold where it comes trickling into this lake or that pool, gird up their loins<sup>45</sup> once more, and continue their pilgrimage toward its fountain-head.

No man with a genius for legislation has appeared in America. They are rare in the history of the world. There are orators, politicians, and eloquent men, by the thousand; but the speaker has not yet opened his mouth to speak, who is capable of settling the much-vexed questions of the day. We love eloquence for its own sake, and not for any truth which it may utter, or any heroism it may inspire. Our legislators have not yet learned the comparative value of free-trade and of freedom, of union, and of rectitude, to a nation. They have no genius or talent for comparatively humble questions of taxation and finance, commerce and manufactures and agriculture. If we were left solely to the wordy wit of legislators in Congress for our guidance, uncorrected by the seasonable experience and the effectual complaints of the people, America would not long retain her rank among the nations. For eighteen hundred years, though perchance I have no right to say it, the New Testament has been written; yet where is the legislator who has wisdom and practical talent enough to avail himself of the light which it sheds on the science of legislation?

The authority of government, even such as I am willing to submit to,—for I will cheerfully obey those who know and can do better than I, and in many things even those who neither know nor can do so well,—is still an impure one: to be strictly just, it must have the sanction and consent of the governed.

<sup>43</sup> Quotations from Webster's speech on the Texas question, delivered December 22, 1845.

<sup>44</sup> From Webster's speech on the bill to exclude slavery from the territories, delivered August 12, 1848. Thoreau added the following note: "These extracts have been inserted since the Lecture was read." It is not known where or when "Civil Disobedience" was first given as a lecture.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Luke 12:35.

It can have no pure right over my person and property but what I concede to it. The progress from an absolute to a limited monarchy, from a limited monarchy to a democracy, is a progress toward a true respect for the individual. Is a democracy, such as we know it, the last improvement possible in government? Is it not possible to take a step further towards recognizing and organizing the rights of man? There will never be a really free and enlightened State, until the State comes to recognize the individual as a higher and independent power, from which all its own power and authority are derived,

and treats him accordingly. I please myself with imagining a State at last which can afford to be just to all men, and to treat the individual with respect as a neighbor; which even would not think it inconsistent with its own repose, if a few were to live aloof from it, not meddling with it, nor embraced by it, who fulfilled all the duties of neighbors and fellow-men. A State which bore this kind of fruit, and suffered it to drop off as fast as it ripened, would prepare the way for a still more perfect and glorious State, which also I have imagined, but not yet anywhere seen.

## FROM

*Walden* <sup>46</sup>*Economy*

## (CHAPTER I)

When I wrote the following pages, or rather the bulk of them, I lived alone, in the woods, a mile from any neighbor, in a house which I had built myself, on the shore of Walden Pond, in Concord, Massachusetts, and earned my living by the labor of my hands only. I lived there two years and two months.<sup>47</sup> At present I am a sojourner in civilized life again.

I should not obtrude my affairs so much on the notice of my readers if very particular inquiries had not been made by my townsmen concerning my mode of life, which some would call impertinent, though they do not appear to me at all impertinent, but, considering the circumstances, very natural and pertinent. Some have asked what I got to eat; if I did not feel lonesome; if I was not afraid; and the like. Others have been curious to learn what portion of my income I devoted to charitable purposes; and some, who have large families, how many poor children I maintained. I will therefore ask those of my readers who feel no particular interest in me to par-

don me if I undertake to answer some of these questions in this book.<sup>48</sup> In most books, the *I*, or first person, is omitted; in this it will be retained; that, in respect to egotism, is the main difference. We commonly do not remember that it is, after all, always the first person that is speaking. I should not talk so much about myself if there were any body else whom I knew as well. Unfortunately, I am confined to this theme by the narrowness of my experience. Moreover, I, on my side, require of every writer, first or last, a simple and sincere account of his own life,<sup>49</sup> and not merely what he has heard of other men's lives: some such account as he would send to his kindred from a distant land; for if he has lived sincerely, it must have been in a distant land to me.<sup>50</sup> Perhaps these pages are more particularly addressed to poor students. As for the rest of my readers, they will accept such portions as apply to them. I trust that none will stretch the seams in putting on the coat, for it may do good service to him whom it fits.

I would fain say something, not so much concerning the Chinese and Sandwich Islanders as you who read these pages, who are said to live in New Eng-

<sup>46</sup> The text is that of the first edition, Boston, 1854.

<sup>47</sup> Thoreau began his bona fide residence at Walden Pond on July 4, 1845, and left on September 6, 1847. Walden Pond is approximately two miles southeast of Concord. The Fitchburg Railroad skirts the southwest side of the lake, which is about a half mile wide at its broadest point. Thoreau "squatted" on a tract of land belonging to his friend Emerson, on the north shore of the lake. Most of *Walden* was written during 1846, and considerable portions of it were first read as lectures in Concord between 1846 and 1849.

<sup>48</sup> In a surviving manuscript version there is inserted at this point a Whitmanesque sentence in which Thoreau says he intends to "brag a good deal more than is according to the accepted rules of good taste." Elsewhere he made it clear that he was not bragging for himself but "for humanity."

<sup>49</sup> This idea is related to Thoreau's belief that a large part of all writing is necessarily autobiographical, and that a true poem, for instance, is the life of the poet.

<sup>50</sup> In the manuscript there follows a considerable expansion of this idea.

land; something about your condition, especially your outward condition or circumstances in this world, in this town, what it is whether it is necessary that it be as bad as it is, whether it cannot be improved as well as not. I have travelled a good deal in Concord; and every where, in shops, and offices, and fields, the inhabitants have appeared to me to be doing penance in a thousand remarkable ways. What I have heard of Bramins sitting exposed to four fires and looking in the face of the sun; or hanging suspended, with their heads downward, over flames; or looking at the heavens over their shoulders "until it becomes impossible for them to resume their natural position, while from the twist of the neck nothing but liquids can pass into the stomach;" or dwelling, chained for life, at the foot of a tree; or measuring with their bodies, like caterpillars, the breadth of vast empires; or standing on one leg on the tops of pillars.—even these forms of conscious penance are hardly more incredible and astonishing than the scenes which I<sup>20</sup> daily witness. The twelve labors of Hercules were trifling in comparison with those which my neighbors have undertaken; for they were only twelve, and had an end; but I could never see that these men slew or captured any monster or finished any labor. They have no friend Iolas<sup>51</sup> to burn with a hot iron the root of the hydra's head, but as soon as one head is crushed, two spring up.

I see young men, my townsmen, whose misfortune it is to have inherited farms, houses, barns, <sup>30</sup>cattle, and farming tools; for these are more easily acquired than got rid of. Better if they had been born in the open pasture and suckled by a wolf, that they might have seen with clearer eyes what field they were called to labor in. Who made them serfs of the soil? Why should they eat their sixty acres, when man is condemned to eat only his peck of dirt? Why should they begin digging their graves as soon as they are born? They have got to live a man's life, pushing all these things before them, and get on as well as <sup>40</sup>they can. How many a poor immortal soul have I met well nigh crushed and smothered under its load, creeping down the road of life, pushing before it a barn seventy-five feet by forty, its Augean stables never cleansed, and one hundred acres of land, tillage, mowing, pasture, and wood-lot! The portionless, who struggle with no such unnecessary inherited encum-

brances, find it labor enough to subdue and cultivate a few cubic feet of flesh.

But men labor under a mistake. The better part of the man is soon ploughed into the soil for compost. By a seeming fate, commonly called necessity, they are employed, as it says in an old book, laying up treasures which moth and rust will corrupt and thieves break through and steal. It is a fool's life, as they will find when they get to the end of it, if not before. It is said that Deucalion and Pyrrha created men by throwing stones over their heads behind them:—

Inde genus durum sumus, experiensque laborum,  
Et documenta damus quâ simus origine nati.<sup>52</sup>

Or, as Raleigh rhymes it in his sonorous way,—

From thence our kind hard-hearted is, enduring pain and  
care,  
Approving that our bodies of a stony nature are.

So much for a blind obedience to a blundering oracle, throwing the stones over their heads behind them, and not seeing where they fell.

Most men, even in this comparatively free country, through mere ignorance and mistake, are so occupied with the factitious cares and superfluously coarse labors of life that its finer fruits cannot be plucked by them. Their fingers, from excessive toil, are too clumsy and tremble too much for that. Actually, the laboring man has not leisure for a true integrity day by day; he cannot afford to sustain the manliest relations to men; his labor would be depreciated in the market. He has no time to be any thing but a machine. How can he remember well his ignorance—which his growth requires—who has so often to use his knowledge? We should feed and clothe him gratuitously sometimes, and recruit him with our cordials, before we judge of him. The finest qualities of our nature, like the bloom on fruits, can be preserved only by the most delicate handling. Yet we do not treat ourselves nor one another thus tenderly.

Some of you, we all know, are poor, find it hard to live, are sometimes, as it were, gasping for breath. I have no doubt that some of you who read this book are unable to pay for all the dinners which you have actually eaten, or for the coats and shoes which are fast wearing or are already worn out, and have come to this page to spend borrowed or stolen time,

<sup>51</sup> Iolas, or Iolaus, was the son of the half-brother of Hercules, Iphicles, and the companion of Hercules in his labors.

<sup>52</sup> Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, I, 414-15.

robbing your creditors of an hour. It is very evident what mean and sneaking lives many of you live, for my sight has been whetted by experience; always on the limits, trying to get into business and trying to get out of debt, a very ancient slough, called by the Latins *æs alienum*, another's brass, for some of their coins were made of brass; still living, and dying, and buried by this other's brass; always promising to pay, promising to pay, to-morrow, and dying to-day, insolvent; seeking to curry favor, to get custom, by how many modes, only not state-prison offences; lying, flattering, voting, contracting yourselves into a nutshell of civility, or dilating into an atmosphere of thin and vaporous generosity, that you may persuade your neighbor to let you make his shoes, or his hat, or his coat, or his carriage, or import his groceries for him; making yourselves sick, that you may lay up something against a sick day, something to be tucked away in an old chest, or in a stocking behind the plastering, or, more safely, in the brick bank; no matter where, no matter how much or how little.

I sometimes wonder that we can be so frivolous, I may almost say, as to attend to the gross but somewhat foreign form of servitude called Negro Slavery, there are so many keen and subtle masters that enslave both north and south. It is hard to have a southern overseer; it is worse to have a northern one; but worst of all when you are the slave-driver of yourself. Talk of a divinity in man! Look at the teamster on the highway, wending to market by day or night; does any divinity stir within him? <sup>53</sup> His highest duty to fodder and water his horses! What is his destiny to him compared with the shipping interests? Does not he drive for Squire Make-a-stir? How godlike, how immortal, is he? See how he cowers and sneaks, how vaguely all the day he fears, not being immortal nor divine, but the slave and prisoner of his own opinion of himself, a fame won by his own deeds. Public opinion is a weak tyrant compared with our own private opinion. What a man <sup>40</sup> thinks of himself, that it is which determines, or rather indicates, his fate. Self-emancipation even in the West Indian provinces of the fancy and imagination,—what Wilberforce <sup>54</sup> is there to bring that about? Think, also, of the ladies of the land weaving

toilet cushions against the last day, not to betray too green an interest in their fates! As if you could kill time without injuring eternity.

The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation. What is called resignation is confirmed desperation. From the desperate city you go into the desperate country, and have to console yourself with the bravery of minks and muskrats. A stereotyped but unconscious despair is concealed even under what are called the games and amusements of mankind. There is no play in them, for this comes after work. But it is a characteristic of wisdom not to do desperate things.

When we consider what, to use the words of the catechism, is the chief end of man, and what are the true necessities and means of life, it appears as if men had deliberately chosen the common mode of living because they preferred it to any other. Yet they honestly think there is no choice left. But alert and healthy natures remember that the sun rose clear. It is never too late to give up our prejudices. No way of thinking or doing, however ancient, can be trusted without proof. What every body echoes or in silence passes by as true to-day may turn out to be falsehood to-morrow, mere smoke of opinion, which some had trusted for a cloud that would sprinkle fertilizing rain on their fields. What old people say you cannot do you try and find that you can. <sup>55</sup> Old deeds for old people, and new deeds for new. Old people did not know enough once, perchance, to fetch fresh fuel to keep the fire a-going; new people put a little dry wood under a pot, and are whirled round the globe with the speed of birds, in a way to kill old people, as the phrase is. Age is no better, hardly so well, qualified for an instructor as youth, for it has not profited so much as it has lost. One may almost doubt if the wisest man has learned any thing of absolute value by living. Practically, the old have no very important advice to give the young, their own experience has been so partial, and their lives have been such miserable failures, for private reasons, as they must believe; and it may be that they have some faith left which belies that experience, and they are only less young than they were. I have lived some thirty years on this planet, and I have yet to hear the first syllable of valuable or even earnest advice from my seniors. They have told me nothing, and probably

<sup>53</sup> An allusion to Addison's *Cato*, V, i: "'Tis the divinity that stirs within us."

<sup>54</sup> William Wilberforce (1757-1833), member of Parliament, associate of Pitt, and persistent agitator for the abolition of the slave trade.

<sup>55</sup> The debt of Robert Louis Stevenson to this and other passages from Thoreau in such essays as "*Æs Triplex*," "*Crabbed Age and Youth*," and "*An Apology for Idlers*" has often been pointed out.

cannot tell me any thing, to the purpose. Here is life, an experiment to a great extent untried by me; but it does not avail me that they have tried it. If I have any experience which I think valuable, I am sure to reflect that this my Mentors said nothing about.

One farmer says to me, "You cannot live on vegetable food solely, for it furnishes nothing to make bones with;" and so he religiously devotes a part of his day to supplying his system with the raw material of bones; walking all the while he talks behind his oxen, which, with vegetable-made bones, jerk him and his lumbering plough along in spite of every obstacle. Some things are really necessities of life in some circles, the most helpless and diseased, which in others are luxuries merely, and in others still are entirely unknown.

The whole ground of human life seems to some to have been gone over by their predecessors, both the heights and the valleys, and all things to have been cared for. According to Evelyn,<sup>56</sup> "the wise Solomon prescribed ordinances for the very distances of trees; and the Roman prætors have decided how often you may go into your neighbor's land to gather the acorns which fall on it without trespass, and what share belongs to that neighbor." Hippocrates<sup>57</sup> has even left directions how we should cut our nails; that is, even with the ends of the fingers, neither shorter nor longer. Undoubtedly the very tedium and ennui which presume to have exhausted the variety and the joys of life are as old as Adam. But man's capacities have never been measured; nor are we to judge of what he can do by any precedents, so little has been tried. Whatever have been thy failures hitherto, "be not afflicted, my child, for who shall assign to thee what thou hast left undone?"

We might try our lives by a thousand simple tests; as, for instance, that the same sun which ripens my beans illumines at once a system of earths like ours. If I had remembered this it would have prevented some mistakes. This was not the light in which I hooded them. The stars are the apexes of what wonderful triangles! What distant and different beings in the various mansions of the universe are contemplating the same one at the same moment! Nature and human life are as various as our several constitutions. Who shall say what prospect life offers to another? Could a greater miracle take place than for us to look

through each other's eyes for an instant? We should live in all the ages of the world in an hour; ay, in all the worlds of the ages. History, Poetry, Mythology!—I know of no reading of another's experience so startling and informing as this would be.

The greater part of what my neighbors call good I believe in my soul to be bad, and if I repent of any thing, it is very likely to be my good behavior. What demon possessed me that I behaved so well? You may say the wisest thing you can, old man,—you who have lived seventy years, not without honor of a kind,—I hear an irresistible voice which invites me away from all that. One generation abandons the enterprises of another like stranded vessels.

I think that we may safely trust a good deal more than we do. We may waive just so much care of ourselves as we honestly bestow elsewhere. Nature is as well adapted to our weakness as to our strength. The incessant anxiety and strain of some is a well nigh incurable form of disease. We are made to exaggerate the importance of what work we do; and yet how much is not done by us! or, what if we had been taken sick? How vigilant we are! determined not to live by faith if we can avoid it; all the day long on the alert, at night we unwillingly say our prayers and commit ourselves to uncertainties. So thoroughly and sincerely are we compelled to live, reverencing our life, and denying the possibility of change. This is the only way, we say; but there are as many ways as there can be drawn radii from one centre. All change is a miracle to contemplate; but it is a miracle which is taking place every instant. Confucius<sup>58</sup> said, "To know that we know what we know, and that we do not know what we do not know, that is true knowledge." When one man has reduced a fact of the imagination to be a fact to his understanding, I foresee that all men will at length establish their lives on that basis.

Let us consider for a moment what most of the trouble and anxiety which I have referred to is about, and how much it is necessary that we be troubled, or, at least, careful. It would be some advantage to live a primitive and frontier life, though in the midst of an outward civilization, if only to learn what are the gross necessities of life and what methods have been taken to obtain them; or even to look over the old day-books of the merchants, to see what it was that

<sup>56</sup> John Evelyn (1620–1703), English diarist.

<sup>57</sup> Hippocrates (460–359? B.C.), Greek physician.

<sup>58</sup> Ancient Chinese philosopher (551–478 B.C.).



men most commonly bought at the stores, what they stored, that is, what are the grossest groceries. For the improvements of ages have had but little influence on the essential laws of man's existence; as our skeletons, probably, are not to be distinguished from those of our ancestors.

By the words, *necessary of life*, I mean whatever, of all that man obtains by his own exertions, has been from the first, or from long use has become, so important to human life that few, if any, whether <sup>10</sup> from savageness, or poverty, or philosophy, ever attempt to do without it. To many creatures there is in this sense but one necessary of life, Food. To the bison of the prairie it is a few inches of palatable grass, with water to drink; unless he seeks the Shelter of the forest or the mountain's shadow. None of the brute creation requires more than Food and Shelter. The necessities of life for man in this climate may, accurately enough, be distributed under the several heads of Food, Shelter, Clothing, and Fuel; for not <sup>20</sup> till we have secured these are we prepared to entertain the true problems of life with freedom and a prospect of success. Man has invented, not only houses, but clothes and cooked food; and possibly from the accidental discovery of the warmth of fire, and the consequent use of it, at first a luxury, arose the present necessity to sit by it. We observe cats and dogs acquiring the same second nature. By proper Shelter and Clothing we legitimately retain our own internal heat; but with an excess of these, or of Fuel, <sup>30</sup> that is, with an external heat greater than our own internal, may not cookery properly be said to begin? Darwin, the naturalist, says of the inhabitants of Tierra del Fuego,<sup>59</sup> that while his own party, who were well clothed and sitting close to a fire, were far from too warm, these naked savages, who were farther off, were observed, to his great surprise, "to be streaming with perspiration at undergoing such a roasting." So, we are told, the New Hollander<sup>60</sup> goes naked with impunity, while the European shivers in his clothes. Is it impossible to combine the hardness of these savages with the intellectualness of the civilized man? According to Liebig, man's body is a stove, and food the fuel which keeps up the

internal combustion in the lungs. In cold weather we eat more, in warm less. The animal heat is the result of a slow combustion, and disease and death take place when this is too rapid; or for want of fuel, or from some defect in the draught, the fire goes out. Of course the vital heat is not to be confounded with fire; but so much for analogy. It appears, therefore, from the above list, that the expression, *animal life*, is nearly synonymous with the expression, *animal heat*; for while Food may be regarded as the Fuel which keeps up the fire within us,—and Fuel serves only to prepare that Food or to increase the warmth of our bodies by addition from without,—Shelter and Clothing also serve only to retain the *heat* thus generated and absorbed.

The grand necessity, then, for our bodies, is to keep warm, to keep the vital heat in us. What pains we accordingly take, not only with our Food, and Clothing, and Shelter, but with our beds, which are <sup>40</sup> our night-clothes, robbing the nests and breasts of birds to prepare this shelter within a shelter, as the mole has its bed of grass and leaves at the end of its burrow! The poor man is wont to complain that this is a cold world; and to cold, no less physical than social, we refer directly a great part of our ills. The summer, in some climates, makes possible to man a sort of Elysian life. Fuel, except to cook his Food, is then unnecessary; the sun is his fire, and many of the fruits are sufficiently cooked by its rays; while Food generally is more various, and more easily obtained, and Clothing and Shelter are wholly or half unnecessary. At the present day, and in this country, as I find by my own experience, a few implements, a knife, an axe, a spade, a wheelbarrow, &c., and for the studious, lamplight, stationery, and access to a few books, rank next to necessities, and can all be obtained at a trifling cost. Yet some, not wise, go to the other side of the globe, to barbarous and unhealthy regions, and devote themselves to trade for <sup>50</sup> ten or twenty years, in order that they may live,—that is, keep comfortably warm,—and die in New England at last. The luxuriously rich are not simply kept comfortably warm, but unnaturally hot; as I implied before, they are cooked, of course *à la mode*.<sup>61</sup>

Most of the luxuries, and many of the so called comforts of life, are not only not indispensable, but positive hinderances to the elevation of mankind.

<sup>61</sup> After the fashion.

<sup>59</sup> The experience here recounted is from the *Narrative of The Surveying Voyages of His Majesty's Ships "Adventure" and "Beagle"*. . . . London, 1839, III, 240. The third volume is by Charles Darwin.

<sup>60</sup> Aborigines of Australia, commonly called (up to the middle of the nineteenth century) New Holland.



With respect to luxuries and comforts, the wisest have ever lived a more simple and meagre life than the poor. The ancient philosophers, Chinese, Hindoo, Persian, and Greek, were a class than which none has been poorer in outward riches, none so rich in inward. We know not much about them. It is remarkable that we know so much of them as we do. The same is true of the more modern reformers and benefactors of their race. None can be an impartial or wise observer of human life but from the vantage ground of what we should call voluntary poverty. Of a life of luxury the fruit is luxury, whether in agriculture, or commerce, or literature, or art. There are nowadays professors of philosophy, but not philosophers. Yet it is admirable to profess because it was once admirable to live. To be a philosopher is not merely to have subtle thoughts, nor even to found a school, but so to love wisdom as to live according to its dictates, a life of simplicity, independence, magnanimity, and trust. It is to solve some of the problems of life, not only theoretically, but practically. The success of great scholars and thinkers is commonly a courtier-like success, not kingly, not manly. They make shift to live merely by conformity, practically as their fathers did, and are in no sense the progenitors of a nobler race of men. But why do men degenerate ever? What makes families run out? What is the nature of the luxury which enervates and destroys nations? Are we sure that there is none of it in our own lives? The philosopher is in advance of his age even in the outward form of his life. He is not fed, sheltered, clothed, warmed, like his contemporaries. How can a man be a philosopher and not maintain his vital heat by better methods than other men?

When a man is warmed by the several modes which I have described, what does he want next? Surely not more warmth of the same kind, as more and richer food, larger and more splendid houses, finer and more abundant clothing, more numerous, incessant and hotter fires, and the like. When he has obtained those things which are necessary to life, there is another alternative than to obtain the superfluities; and that is, to adventure on life now, his vacation from humbler toil having commenced. The soil, it appears, is suited to the seed, for it has sent its radicle downward, and it may now send its shoot upward also with confidence. Why has man rooted himself thus firmly in the earth, but that he may

rise in the same proportion into the heavens above?—for the nobler plants are valued for the fruit they bear at last in the air and light, far from the ground, and are not treated like the humbler esculents, which, though they may be biennials, are cultivated only till they have perfected their root, and often cut down at top for this purpose, so that most would not know them in their flowering season.

I do not mean to prescribe rules to strong and valiant natures, who will mind their own affairs whether in heaven or hell, and perchance build more magnificently and spend more lavishly than the richest, without ever impoverishing themselves, not knowing how they live,—if, indeed, there are any such, as has been dreamed; nor to those who find their encouragement and inspiration in precisely the present condition of things, and cherish it with the fondness and enthusiasm of lovers,—and, to some extent, I reckon myself in this number; I do not speak to those who are well employed, in whatever circumstances, and they know whether they are well employed or not;—but mainly to the mass of men who are discontented, and idly complaining of the hardness of their lot or of the times, when they might improve them. There are some who complain most energetically and inconsolably of any, because they are, as they say, doing their duty. I also have in my mind that seemingly wealthy, but most terribly impoverished class of all, who have accumulated dross, but know not how to use it, or get rid of it, and thus have forged their own golden or silver fetters.

If I should attempt to tell how I have desired to spend my life in years past, it would probably surprise those of my readers who are somewhat acquainted with its actual history; it would certainly astonish those who know nothing about it. I will only hint at some of the enterprises which I have cherished.

In any weather, at any hour of the day or night, I have been anxious to improve the nick of time, and notch it on my stick too; to stand on the meeting of two eternities, the past and future, which is precisely the present moment; to toe that line. You will pardon some obscurities, for there are more secrets in my trade than in most men's, and yet not voluntarily kept, but inseparable from its very nature. I would gladly tell all that I know about it, and never paint "No Admittance" on my gate.

I long ago lost a hound, a bay horse, and a turtle-dove, and am still on their trail.<sup>62</sup> Many are the travellers I have spoken concerning them, describing their tracks and what calls they answered to. I have met one or two who had heard the hound, and the tramp of the horse, and even seen the dove disappear behind a cloud, and they seemed as anxious to recover them as if they had lost them themselves.

To anticipate, not the sunrise and the dawn 10 merely, but, if possible, Nature herself! How many mornings, summer and winter, before yet any neighbor was stirring about his business, have I been about mine! No doubt, many of my townsmen have met me returning from this enterprise, farmers starting for Boston in the twilight, or woodchoppers going to their work. It is true, I never assisted the sun materially in his rising, but, doubt not, it was of the last importance only to be present at it.<sup>63</sup>

So many autumn, ay, and winter days, spent out- 20 side the town, trying to hear what was in the wind, to hear and carry it express! I well-nigh sunk all my capital in it, and lost my own breath into the bargain, running in the face of it. If it had concerned either of the political parties, depend upon it, it would have appeared in the Gazette with the earliest intelligence. At other times watching from the observatory of some cliff or tree, to telegraph any new arrival; or waiting at evening on the hill-tops for the sky to fall, that I might catch something, though I never caught 30 much, and that, manna-wise, would dissolve again in the sun.

For a long time I was reporter to a journal, of no very wide circulation, whose editor has never yet seen fit to print the bulk of my contributions, and, as is too common with writers, I got only my labor for my pains.<sup>64</sup> However, in this case my pains were their own reward.

For many years I was self-appointed inspector of snow storms and rain storms, and did my duty faith- 40

fully; surveyor, if not of highways, then of forest paths and all across-lot routes, keeping them open, and ravines bridged and passable at all seasons, where the public heel had testified to their utility.

I have looked after the wild stock of the town, which give a faithful herdsman a good deal of trouble by leaping fences; and I have had an eye to the unfrequented nooks and corners of the farm; though I did not always know whether Jonas or Solomon worked in a particular field to-day; that was none of my business. I have watered the red huckleberry, the sand cherry and the nettle tree, the red pine and the black ash, the white grape and the yellow violet, which might have withered else in dry seasons.

In short, I went on thus for a long time, I may say it without boasting, faithfully minding my business, till it became more and more evident that my townsmen would not after all admit me into the list of town officers, nor make my place a sinecure with a moderate allowance. My accounts, which I can swear to have kept faithfully, I have, indeed, never got audited, still less accepted, still less paid and settled. However, I have not set my heart on that.

Not long since, a strolling Indian went to sell baskets at the house of a well-known lawyer<sup>65</sup> in my neighborhood. "Do you wish to buy any baskets?" he asked. "No, we do not want any," was the reply. "What!" exclaimed the Indian as he went out the gate, "do you mean to starve us?" Having seen his industrious white neighbors so well off,—that the lawyer had only to weave arguments, and by some magic wealth and standing followed, he had said to himself; I will go into business; I will weave baskets; it is a thing which I can do. Thinking that when he had made the baskets he would have done his part, and then it would be the white man's to buy them. He had not discovered that it was necessary for him to make it worth the other's while to buy them, or at least make him think that it was so, or to make something else which it would be worth his while to buy. I too had woven a kind of basket of a delicate texture, but I had not made it worth any one's while to buy them. Yet not the less, in my case, did I think it worth my while to weave them, and instead of studying how to make it worth men's while to buy my baskets, I studied rather how to avoid the necessity of selling them. The life which men praise and regard as

<sup>62</sup> It is generally held that this passage is not to be taken literally but rather as allegorical, and that the hound, bay horse, and turtle-dove are symbols of unattainable objects for Thoreau. One interpretation, reputedly from Thoreau's own lips, is that the hound, bay horse, and turtle-dove refer to Edmund Sewall, John Thoreau, and Ellen Sewall.

<sup>63</sup> This passage is, as it were, an anticipatory answer to Lowell's charge, in his critical essay, that Thoreau took himself too seriously.

<sup>64</sup> Thoreau's whimsical reference to his own manuscript journal, not to any periodical, although his connection with the *Dial* fits the circumstances which Thoreau mentions.

<sup>65</sup> Samuel Hoar (1778-1856).

successful is but one kind. Why should we exaggerate any one kind at the expense of the others?

Finding that my fellow-citizens were not likely to offer me any room in the court house, or any curacy or living any where else, but I must shift for myself, I turned my face more exclusively than ever to the woods, where I was better known. I determined to go into business at once, and not wait to acquire the usual capital, using such slender means as I had already got. My purpose in going to Walden Pond was <sup>10</sup> not to live cheaply nor to live dearly there, but to transact some private business <sup>66</sup> with the fewest obstacles; to be hindered from accomplishing which for want of a little common sense, a little enterprise and business talent, appeared not so sad as foolish.

I have always endeavored to acquire strict business habits; they are indispensable to every man. If your trade is with the Celestial Empire, then some small counting house on the coast, in some Salem harbor, <sup>20</sup> will be fixture enough. You will export such articles as the country affords, purely native products, much ice and pine timber and a little granite, always in native bottoms. These will be good ventures. To oversee all the details yourself in person; to be at once pilot and captain, and owner and underwriter; to buy and sell and keep the accounts; to read every letter received, and write or read every letter sent; to superintend the discharge of imports night and day; to be upon many parts of the coast almost at the same <sup>30</sup> time;—often the richest freight will be discharged upon a Jersey shore;—to be your own telegraph, unweariedly sweeping the horizon, speaking all passing vessels bound coastwise; to keep up a steady despatch of commodities, for the supply of such a distant and exorbitant market; to keep yourself informed of the state of the markets, prospects of war and peace every where, and anticipate the tendencies of trade and civilization,—taking advantage of the results of all exploring expeditions, using new passages and all im- <sup>40</sup> provements in navigation;—charts to be studied, the position of reefs and new lights and buoys to be ascertained, and ever, and ever, the logarithmic tables to be corrected, for by the error of some calculator the vessel often splits upon a rock that should have reached a friendly pier,—there is the untold fate of

<sup>66</sup> Specifically, to write *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*, published in 1849. However, Thoreau doubtless had in mind also his desire to put his spiritual or transcendental ideas of living into practice.

La Perouse; <sup>67</sup>—universal science to be kept pace with, studying the lives of all great discoverers and navigators, great adventurers and merchants, from Hanno and the Phoenicians down to our day; in fine, account of stock to be taken from time to time, to know how you stand. It is a labor to task the faculties of a man,—such problems of profit and loss, of interest, of tare and tret, and gauging of all kinds in it, as demand a universal knowledge.

I have thought that Walden Pond would be a good place for business, not solely on account of the railroad and the ice trade; it offers advantages which it may not be good policy to divulge; it is a good post and a good foundation. No Neva marshes to be filled; though you must every where build on piles of your own driving. It is said that a flood-tide, with a westerly wind, and ice in the Neva, would sweep St. Petersburg from the face of the earth.

As this business was to be entered into without the usual capital, it may not be easy to conjecture where those means, that will still be indispensable to every such undertaking, were to be obtained. As for Clothing, to come at once to the practical part of the question, perhaps we are led oftener by the love of novelty, and a regard for the opinions of men, in procuring it, than by a true utility. Let him who has work to do recollect that the object of clothing is, first, to retain the vital heat, and secondly, in this state of society, to cover nakedness, and he may judge how much of any necessary or important work may be accomplished without adding to his wardrobe. Kings and queens who wear a suit but once, though made by some tailor or dressmaker to their majesties, cannot know the comfort of wearing a suit that fits. They are no better than wooden horses to hang the clean clothes on. Every day our garments become more assimilated to ourselves, receiving the impress of the wearer's character, until we hesitate to lay them aside, without such delay and medical appliances and some such solemnity even as our bodies. No man ever stood the lower in my estimation for having a patch in his clothes; yet I am sure that there is greater anxiety, commonly, to have fashionable, or at least clean and unpatched clothes, than to have a sound conscience. But even if the rent is not mended, perhaps the worst vice betrayed is improvidence. I

<sup>67</sup> Jean-François de Galaup, Comte de la Pérouse (1742–c. 1788), an ill-fated explorer of the Northwest Passage.

sometimes try my acquaintances by such tests as this;—who could wear a patch, or two extra seams only, over the knee? Most behave as if they believed that their prospects for life would be ruined if they should do it. It would be easier for them to hobble to town with a broken leg than with a broken pantaloons. Often if an accident happens to a gentleman's legs, they can be mended; but if a similar accident happens to the legs of his pantaloons, there is no help for it; for he considers, not what is truly respectable, but what is respected. We know but few men, a great many coats and breeches.<sup>68</sup> Dress a scarecrow in your last shift, you standing shiftless by, who would not soonest salute the scarecrow? Passing a cornfield the other day, close by a hat and coat on a stake, I recognized the owner of the farm. He was only a little more weather-beaten than when I saw him last. I have heard of a dog that barked at every stranger who approached his master's premises with clothes on, but was easily quieted by a naked thief. It is an interesting question how far men would retain their relative rank if they were divested of their clothes. Could you, in such a case, tell surely of any company of civilized men, which belonged to the most respected class? When Madam Pfeiffer,<sup>69</sup> in her adventurous travels round the world, from east to west, had got so near home as Asiatic Russia, she says that she felt the necessity of wearing other than a travelling dress, when she went to meet the authorities, for she "was now in a civilized country, where . . . people are judged of by their clothes. Even in our democratic New England towns the accidental possession of wealth, and its manifestation in dress and equipage alone, obtain for the possessor almost universal respect. But they who yield such respect, numerous as they are, are so far heathen, and need to have a missionary sent to them. Beside, clothes introduced sewing, a kind of work which you may call endless; a woman's dress, at least, is never done.

A man who has at length found something to do<sup>40</sup> will not need to get a new suit to do it in; for him the old will do, that has lain dusty in the garret for an indeterminate period. Old shoes will serve a hero longer than they have served his valet,—if a hero ever has a valet,—bare feet are older than shoes, and he can make them do. Only they who go to soirées and

<sup>68</sup> Possibly a reminiscence of the clothes philosophy in Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus*.

<sup>69</sup> Ida Laura Pfeiffer, an adventurous German traveler, whose travel books Thoreau had read.

legislative halls must have new coats, coats to change as often as the man changes in them. But if my jacket and trousers, my hat and shoes, are fit to worship God in, they will do; will they not? Who ever saw his old clothes,—his old coat, actually worn out, resolved into its primitive elements, so that it was not a deed of charity to bestow it on some poor boy, by him perchance to be bestowed on some poorer still, or shall we say richer, who could do with less? I say, beware of all enterprises that require new clothes, and not rather a new wearer of clothes. If there is not a new man, how can the new clothes be made to fit? If you have any enterprise before you, try it in your old clothes. All men want, not something to *do with*, but something to *do*, or rather something to *be*. Perhaps we should never procure a new suit, however ragged or dirty the old, until we have so conducted, so enterprised or sailed in some way, that we feel like new men in the old, and that to retain it would be like keeping new wine in old bottles. Our moulting season, like that of the fowls, must be a crisis in our lives. The loon retires to solitary ponds to spend it. Thus also the snake casts its slough, and the caterpillar its wormy coat, by an internal industry and expansion; for clothes are but our outmost cuticle and mortal coil. Otherwise we shall be found sailing under false colors, and be inevitably cashiered at last by our own opinion, as well as that of mankind.

We don garment after garment, as if we grew like exogenous plants by addition without. Our outside and often thin and fanciful clothes are our epidermis or false skin, which partakes not of our life, and may be stripped off here and there without fatal injury; our thicker garments, constantly worn, are our cellular integument, or cortex; but our shirts are our liber or true bark, which cannot be removed without girdling and so destroying the man. I believe that all races at some seasons wear something equivalent to the shirt. It is desirable that a man be clad so simply that he can lay his hands on himself in the dark, and that he live in all respects so compactly and preparedly, that, if an enemy take the town, he can, like the old philosopher,<sup>70</sup> walk out the gate empty-handed without anxiety. While one thick garment is, for most purposes, as good as three thin ones, and cheap clothing can be obtained at prices really to suit customers; while a thick coat can be bought for five dol-

<sup>70</sup> Bias of the sixth century B.C. Thoreau made note of the incident in his *Journal*, for July 12, 1840, VII, 169-70.

lars, which will last as many years, thick pantaloons for two dollars, cowhide boots for a dollar and a half a pair, a summer hat for a quarter of a dollar, and a winter cap for sixty-two and a half cents, or a better be made at home at a nominal cost, where is he so poor that, clad in such a suit, *of his own earning*, there will not be found wise men to do him reverence?

When I ask for a garment of a particular form, my tailor<sup>71</sup> tells me gravely, "They do not make them so now," not emphasizing the "They" at all, as if she quoted an authority as impersonal as the Fates, and I find it difficult to get made what I want, simply because she cannot believe that I mean what I say, that I am so rash. When I hear this oracular sentence, I am for a moment absorbed in thought, emphasizing to myself each word separately that I may come at the meaning of it, that I may find out by what degree of consanguinity *They* are related to *me*, and what authority they may have in an affair which affects me so nearly; and, finally, I am inclined to answer her with equal mystery, and without any more emphasis of the "they,"—"It is true, they did not make them so recently, but they do now." Of what use this measuring of me if she does not measure my character, but only the breadth of my shoulders, as it were a peg to hang the coat on? We worship not the Graces, nor the Paræ,<sup>72</sup> but Fashion. She spins and weaves and cuts with full authority. The head monkey at Paris puts on a traveller's cap, and all the monkeys in America do the same. I sometimes despair of getting any thing quite simple and honest done in this world by the help of men. They would have to be passed through a powerful press first, to squeeze their old notions out of them, so that they would not soon get their legs again, and then there would be some one in the company with a maggot in his head, hatched from an egg deposited there nobody knows when, for not even fire kills these things, and you would have lost your labor. Nevertheless, we will not forget that some Egyptian wheat was handed down to us by a mummy.

On the whole, I think that it cannot be maintained that dressing has in this or any country risen to the dignity of an art. At present men make shift to wear what they can get. Like shipwrecked sailors, they put

on what they can find on the beach, and at a little distance, whether of space or time, laugh at each other's masquerade. Every generation laughs at the old fashions, but follows religiously the new. We are amused at beholding the costume of Henry VIII., or Queen Elizabeth, as much as if it was that of the King and Queen of the Cannibal Islands. All costume off a man is pitiful or grotesque. It is only the serious eye peering from and the sincere life passed within it, which restrain laughter and consecrate the costume of any people. Let Harlequin be taken with a fit of the colic and his trappings will have to serve that mood too. When the soldier is hit by a cannon ball rags are as becoming as purple.

The childish and savage taste of men and women for new patterns keeps how many shaking and squinting through kalcidoscopes that they may discover the particular figure which this generation requires today. The manufacturers have learned that this taste is merely whimsical. Of two patterns which differ only by a few threads more or less of a particular color, the one will be sold readily, the other lie on the shelf, though it frequently happens that after the lapse of a season the latter becomes the most fashionable. Comparatively, tattooing is not the hideous custom which it is called. It is not barbarous merely because the printing is skin-deep and unalterable.

I cannot believe that our factory system is the best mode by which men may get clothing. The condition of the operatives is becoming every day more like that of the English; and it cannot be wondered at, since, as far as I have heard or observed, the principal object is, not that mankind may be well and honestly clad, but, unquestionably, that the corporations may be enriched. In the long run men hit only what they aim at. Therefore, though they should fail immediately, they had better aim at something high.

As for a Shelter, I will not deny that this is now a necessary of life, though there are instances of men having done without it for long periods in colder countries than this. Samuel Laing says that "The Laplander in his skin dress, and in a skin bag which he puts over his head and shoulders, will sleep night after night on the snow . . . in a degree of cold which would extinguish the life of one exposed to it in any woollen clothing." He had seen them asleep thus. Yet he adds, "They are not hardier than other people." But, probably, man did not live long on the earth without discovering the convenience which

<sup>71</sup> Miss Mary Minott, sister of George Minott, whom both Thoreau and Emerson mention in their *Journals*.

<sup>72</sup> The three fates of Roman mythology.

there is in a house, the domestic comforts, which phrase may have originally signified the satisfactions of the house more than of the family; though these must be extremely partial and occasional in those climates where the house is associated in our thoughts with winter or the rainy season chiefly, and two thirds of the year, except for a parasol, is unnecessary. In our climate, in the summer, it was formerly almost solely a covering at night. In the Indian gazettes a wigwam was the symbol of a day's march, and a row 10 of them cut or painted on the bark of a tree signified that so many times they had camped. Man was not made so large limbed and robust but that he must seek to narrow his world, and wall in a space such as fitted him. He was at first bare and out of doors; but though this was pleasant enough in serene and warm weather, by daylight, the rainy season and the winter, to say nothing of the torrid sun, would perhaps have nipped his race in the bud if he had not made haste to clothe himself with the shelter of a house. Adam 20 and Eve, according to the fable, wore the bower before other clothes. Man wanted a home, a place of warmth, or comfort, first of physical warmth, then the warmth of the affections.

We may imagine a time when, in the infancy of the human race, some enterprising mortal crept into a hollow in a rock for shelter. Every child begins the world again, to some extent, and loves to stay out doors, even in wet and cold. It plays house, as well as horse, having an instinct for it. Who does not re- 30 member the interest with which when young he looked at shelving rocks, or any approach to a cave? It was the natural yearning of that portion of our most primitive ancestor which still survived in us. From the cave we have advanced to roofs of palm leaves, of bark and boughs, of lincn woven and stretched, of grass and straw, of boards and shingles, of stones and tiles. At last, we know not what it is to live in the open air, and our lives are domestic in more senses than we think. From the hearth to the 40 field is a great distance. It would be well perhaps if we were to spend more of our days and nights without any obstruction between us and the celestial bodies, if the poet did not speak so much from under a roof, or the saint dwell there so long. Birds do not sing in caves, nor do doves cherish their innocence in dovecots.

However, if one designs to construct a dwelling house, it behooves him to exercise a little Yankee

shrewdness, lest after all he find himself in a work-house, a labyrinth without a clew, a muscum, an almshouse, a prison, or a splendid mausoleum instead. Consider first how slight a shelter is absolutely necessary. I have seen Penobscot Indians, in this town, living in tents of thin cotton cloth, while the snow was nearly a foot deep around them, and I thought that they would be glad to have it deeper to keep out the wind. Formerly, when how to get my living honestly, with freedom left for my proper pursuits, was a question which vexed me even more than it does now, for unfortunately I am become somewhat callous, I used to see a large box by the railroad, six feet long by three wide, in which the laborers locked up their tools at night, and it suggested to me that every man who was hard pushed might get such a one for a dollar, and, having bored a few auger holes in it, to admit the air at least, get into it when it rained and at night, and hook down the lid, and so have freedom in his love, and in his soul be free.<sup>73</sup> This did not appear the worst, nor by any means a despicable alternative. You could sit up as late as you pleased, and, whenever you got up, go abroad without any landlord or house-lord dogging you for rent. Many a man is harassed to death to pay the rent of a larger and more luxurious box who would not have frozen to death in such a box as this. I am far from jesting. Economy is a subject which admits of being treated with levity, but it cannot so be disposed of. A comfortable house for a rude and hardy race, that lived mostly out of doors, was once made here almost entirely of such materials as Nature furnished ready to their hands. Gookin,<sup>74</sup> who was superintendent of the Indians subject to the Massachusetts Colony, writing in 1674, says, "The best of their houses are covered very neatly, tight and warm, with barks of trees, slipped from their bodies at those seasons when the sap is up, and made into great flakes, with pressure of weighty timber, when they are green. . . . The meaner sort are covered with mats which they make of a kind of bulrush, and are also indifferently tight and warm, but not so good as the

<sup>73</sup> Reminiscent of Richard Lovelace's lyric, "To Althea from Prison":

"If I have freedom in my love  
And in my soul am free,  
Angels alone that soar above  
Enjoy such liberty."

<sup>74</sup> A reference to Daniel Gookin's *Historical Account of the Doings and Sufferings of the Christian Indians in New England, in the Years 1675, 1676, 1677*, Cambridge, Mass., 1836.

former. . . . Some I have seen, sixty or a hundred feet long and thirty feet broad. . . . I have often lodged in their wigwams, and found them as warm as the best English houses." He adds, that they were commonly carpeted and lined within with well-wrought embroidered mats, and were furnished with various utensils. The Indians had advanced so far as to regulate the effect of the wind by a mat suspended over the hole in the roof and moved by a string. Such a lodge was in the first instance constructed in a day<sup>10</sup> or two at most, and taken down and put up in a few hours; and every family owned one, or its apartment in one.

In the savage state every family owns a shelter as good as the best, and sufficient for its coarser and simpler wants; but I think that I speak within bounds when I say that, though the birds of the air have their nests, and the foxes their holes, and the savages their wigwams, in modern civilized society not more than one half the families own a shelter. In the large towns and cities, where civilization especially prevails, the number of those who own a shelter is a very small fraction of the whole. The rest pay an annual tax for this outside garment of all, become indispensable summer and winter, which would buy a village of Indian wigwams, but now helps to keep them poor as long as they live. I do not mean to insist here on the disadvantage of hiring compared with owning, but it is evident that the savage owns his shelter because it costs so little, while the civilized man hires<sup>20</sup> his commonly because he cannot afford to own it; nor can he, in the long run, any better afford to hire. But, answers one, by merely paying this tax the poor civilized man secures an abode which is a palace compared with the savage's. An annual rent of from twenty-five to a hundred dollars, these are the country rates, entitles him to the benefit of the improvements of centuries, spacious apartments, clean paint and paper, Rumford fireplace,<sup>75</sup> back plastering, Venetian blinds, copper pump, spring lock, a com-<sup>30</sup> modious cellar, and many other things. But how happens it that he who is said to enjoy these things is so commonly a *poor* civilized man, while the savage, who has them not, is rich as a savage? If it is

asserted that civilization is a real advance in the condition of man,—and I think that it is, though only the wise improve their advantages,—it must be shown that it has produced better dwellings without making them more costly; and the cost of a thing is the amount of what I will call life which is required to be changed for it, immediately or in the long run. An average house in this neighborhood costs perhaps eight hundred dollars, and to lay up this sum will take from ten to fifteen years of the laborer's life, even if he is not encumbered with a family;—estimating the pecuniary value of every man's labor at one dollar a day, for if some receive more, others receive less;—so that he must have spent more than half his life commonly before *his* wigwam will be earned. If we suppose him to pay a rent instead, this is but a doubtful choice of evils. Would the savage have been wise to exchange his wigwam for a palace on these terms?

It may be guessed that I reduce almost the whole advantage of holding this superfluous property as a fund in store against the future, so far as the individual is concerned, mainly to the defraying of funeral expenses. But perhaps a man is not required to bury himself. Nevertheless this points to an important distinction between the civilized man and the savage; and, no doubt, they have designs on us for our benefit, in making the life of a civilized people an *institution*, in which the life of the individual is to a great extent absorbed, in order to preserve and perfect that of the race. But I wish to show at what a sacrifice this advantage is at present obtained, and to suggest that we may possibly so live as to secure all the advantage without suffering any of the disadvantage. What mean ye by saying that the poor ye have always with you, or that the fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge?

"As I live, saith the Lord God, ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel."

"Behold all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth it shall not die."

When I consider my neighbors, the farmers of Concord, who are at least as well off as the other classes, I find that for the most part they have been toiling twenty, thirty, or forty years, that they may become the real owners of the farms, which commonly they have inherited with encumbrances, or else bought with hired money,—and we may regard one

<sup>75</sup> Benjamin Thompson, Count Rumford (1753-1814), born in Woburn, Mass., rose to high political favor in England and became adviser to the Elector of Bavaria at Munich. Before his return to England in 1795, he devoted himself to scientific pursuits and is credited with perfecting the principles of the common fireplace.



third of that toil as the cost of their houses,—but commonly they have not paid for them yet. It is true, the encumbrances sometimes outweigh the value of the farm, so that the farm itself becomes one great encumbrance, and still a man is found to inherit it, being well acquainted with it, as he says. On applying to the assessors, I am surprised to learn that they cannot at once name a dozen in the town who own their farms free and clear. If you would know the history of these homesteads, inquire at the bank <sup>10</sup> where they are mortgaged. The man who has actually paid for his farm with labor on it is so rare that every neighbor can point to him. I doubt if there are three such men in Concord. What has been said of the merchants, that a very large majority, even ninety-seven in a hundred, are sure to fail, is equally true of the farmers. With regard to the merchants, however, one of them says pertinently that a great part of their failures are not genuine pecuniary failures, but merely failures to fulfil their engagements, because it <sup>20</sup> is inconvenient; that is, it is the moral character that breaks down. But this puts an infinitely worse face on the matter, and suggests, beside, that probably not even the other three succeed in saving their souls, but are perchance bankrupt in a worse sense than they who fail honestly. Bankruptcy and repudiation are the spring-boards from which much of our civilization vaults and turns its somersets, but the savage stands on the unelastic plank of famine. Yet the Middlesex Cattle Show goes off here with *éclat* annually, as if <sup>30</sup> all the joints of the agricultural machine were suent.<sup>76</sup>

The farmer is endeavoring to solve the problem of a livelihood by a formula more complicated than the problem itself. To get his shoestrings he speculates in herds of cattle. With consummate skill he has set his trap with a hair spring to catch comfort and independence, and then, as he turned away, got his own leg into it. This is the reason he is poor; and for a similar reason we are all poor in respect to a thousand savage comforts, though surrounded by <sup>40</sup> luxuries. As Chapman <sup>77</sup> sings,—

“The false society of men—  
—for earthly greatness  
All heavenly comforts rarefies to air.”

And when the farmer has got his house, he may not

<sup>76</sup> *Suent* is an odd spelling for *suant*, meaning “running smoothly.”

<sup>77</sup> George Chapman (1559?–1634), English dramatic poet and translator of Homer—one of Thoreau’s favorites.

be the richer but the poorer for it, and it may be the house that has got him. As I understand it, that was a valid objection urged by Momus <sup>78</sup> against the house which Minerva made, that she “had not made it movable, by which means a bad neighborhood might be avoided”; and it may still be urged, for our houses are such unwieldy property that we are often imprisoned rather than housed in them; and the bad neighborhood to be avoided is our own scurvy selves. I know one or two families, at least, in this town, who, for nearly a generation, have been wishing to sell their houses in the outskirts and move into the village, but have not been able to accomplish it, and only death will set them free.

Granted that the *majority* are able at last either to own or hire the modern house with all its improvements. While civilization has been improving our houses, it has not equally improved the men who are to inhabit them. It has created palaces, but it was not so easy to create noblemen and kings. And *if the civilized man’s pursuits are no worthier than the savage’s, if he is employed the greater part of his life in obtaining gross necessities and comforts merely, why should he have a better dwelling than the former?*

But how do the poor *minority* fare? Perhaps it will be found, that just in proportion as some have been placed in outward circumstances above the savage, others have been degraded below him. The luxury of one class is counterbalanced by the indigence of another. On the one side is the palace, on the other are the almshouse and “silent poor.” The myriads who built the pyramids to be the tombs of the Pharaohs were fed on garlic, and it may be were not decently buried themselves. The mason who finishes the cornice of the place returns at night perchance to a hut not so good as a wigwam. It is a mistake to suppose that, in a country where the usual evidences of civilization exist, the condition of a very large body of the inhabitants may not be as degraded as that of savages. I refer to the degraded poor, not now to the degraded rich. To know this I should not need to look farther than to the shanties which every where border our railroads, that last improvement in civilization; where I see in my daily walks human beings living in sties, and all winter with an open door, for the sake of light, without any visible, often imaginable, wood pile, and the forms of both old and young

<sup>78</sup> Momus, a mocking and censorious god, personified ridicule.



are permanently contracted by the long habit of shrinking from cold and misery, and the development of all their limbs and faculties is checked. It certainly is fair to look at that class by whose labor the works which distinguish this generation are accomplished. Such too, to a greater or less extent, is the condition of the operatives of every denomination in England, which is the great workhouse of the world. Or I could refer you to Ireland, which is marked as one of the white or enlightened spots on the map. Contrast the physical condition of the Irish with that of the North American Indian, or the South Sea Islander, or any other savage race before it was degraded by contact with the civilized man. Yet I have no doubt that that people's rulers are as wise as the average of civilized rulers. Their condition only proves what squalidness may consist with civilization. I hardly need refer now to the laborers in our Southern States who produce the staple exports of this country, and are themselves a staple production of the South. But to confine myself to those who are said to be in *moderate* circumstances.

Most men appear never to have considered what a house is, and are actually though needlessly poor all their lives because they think that they must have such a one as their neighbors have. As if one were to wear any sort of coat which the tailor might cut out for him, or, gradually leaving off palmleaf hat or cap of woodchuck skin, complain of hard times because he could not afford to buy him a crown! It is possible to invent a house still more convenient and luxurious than we have, which yet all would admit that man could not afford to pay for. Shall we always study to obtain more of these things, and not sometimes to be content with less? Shall the respectable citizen thus gravely teach, by precept and example, the necessity of the young man's providing a certain number of superfluous glow-shoes, and umbrellas, and empty guest chambers for empty guests, before he dies? Why should not our furniture be as simple as the Arab's or the Indian's? When I think of the benefactors of the race, whom we have apotheosized as messengers from heaven, bearers of divine gifts to man, I do not see in my mind any retinue at their heels, any car-load of fashionable furniture. Or what if I were to allow—would it not be a singular allowance?—that our furniture should be more complex than the Arab's, in proportion as we are morally and intellectually his superiors! At present our houses are

cluttered and defiled with it, and a good housewife would sweep out the greater part into the dust hole, and not leave her morning's work undone. Morning work! By the blushes of Aurora<sup>79</sup> and the music of Memnon,<sup>80</sup> what should be man's *morning work* in this world? I had three pieces of limestone on my desk, but I was terrified to find that they required to be dusted daily, when the furniture of my mind was all undusted still, and I threw them out the window in disgust. How, then, could I have a furnished house? I would rather sit in the open air, for no dust gathers on the grass, unless where man has broken ground.

It is the luxurious and dissipated who set the fashions which the herd so diligently follow. The traveller who stops at the best houses, so called, soon discovers this, for the publicans presume him to be a Sardanapalus, and if he resigned himself to their tender mercies he would soon be completely emasculated. I think that in the railroad car we are inclined to spend more on luxury than on safety and convenience, and it threatens without attaining these to become no better than a modern drawing room, with its divans, and ottomans, and sunshades, and a hundred other oriental things, which we are taking west with us, invented for the ladies of the harem and the effeminate natives of the Celestial Empire, which Jonathan should be ashamed to know the names of. I would rather sit on a pumpkin and have it all to myself, than be crowded on a velvet cushion. I would rather ride on earth in an ox cart with a free circulation, than go to heaven in the fancy car of an excursion train and breathe a *malaria* all the way.

The very simplicity and nakedness of man's life in the primitive ages imply this advantage at least, that they left him still but a sojourner in nature. When he was refreshed with food and sleep he contemplated his journey again. He dwelt, as it were, in a tent in this world, and was either threading the valleys, or crossing the plains, or climbing the mountain tops. But lo! men have become the tools of their tools. The man who independently plucked the fruits when he was hungry is become a farmer; and he who stood under a tree for shelter, a housekeeper. We now no longer camp as for a night, but have settled down on

<sup>79</sup> The Roman personification of dawn.

<sup>80</sup> An allusion to the gigantic statue at Thebes from which music was supposed to issue at sunrise.

earth and forgotten heaven. We have adopted Christianity merely as an improved method of *agri*-culture. We have built for this world a family mansion, and for the next a family tomb. The best works of art are the expression of man's struggle to free himself from this condition, but the effect of our art is merely to make this low state comfortable and that higher state to be forgotten. There is actually no place in this village for a work of *fine* art, if any had come down to us, to stand, for our lives, our houses and streets, furnish no proper pedestal for it. There is not a nail to hang a picture on, nor a shelf to receive the bust of a hero or a saint. When I consider how our houses are built and paid for, or not paid for, and their internal economy managed and sustained, I wonder that the floor does not give way under the visitor while he is admiring the gewgaws upon the mantel-piece, and let him through into the cellar, to some solid and honest though earthy foundation. I cannot but perceive that this so called rich and refined life is a thing jumped at, and I do not get on in the enjoyment of the *fine* arts which adorn it, my attention being wholly occupied with the jump; for I remember that the greatest genuine leap, due to human muscles alone, on record, is that of certain wandering Arabs, who are said to have cleared twenty-five feet on level ground. Without factitious support, man is sure to come to earth again beyond that distance. The first question which I am tempted to put to the proprietor of such great impropriety is, Who bolsters you? Are you one of the ninety-seven who fail, or the three who succeed? Answer me these questions, and then perhaps I may look at your bawbles and find them ornamental. The cart before the horse is neither beautiful nor useful. Before we can adorn our houses with beautiful objects the walls must be stripped, and our lives must be stripped, and beautiful housekeeping and beautiful living be laid for a foundation: now, a taste for the beautiful is most cultivated out of doors, where there is no house and no housekeeper.

Old Johnson, in his "Wonder-Working Providence,"<sup>81</sup> speaking of the first settlers of this town, with whom he was contemporary, tells us that "they burrow themselves in the earth for their first shelter under some hillside, and, casting the soil aloft upon timber, they make a smoky fire against the earth, at

the highest side." They did not "provide them houses," says he, "till the earth, by the Lord's blessing, brought forth bread to feed them," and the first year's crop was so light that "they were forced to cut their bread very thin for a long season." The secretary of the Province of New Netherland,<sup>82</sup> writing in Dutch, in 1650, for the information of those who wished to take up land there, states more particularly, that "those in New Netherland, and especially in New England, who have no means to build farm houses at first according to their wishes, dig a square pit in the ground, cellar fashion, six or seven feet deep, as long and as broad as they think proper, case the earth inside with wood all round the wall, and line the wood with the bark of trees or something else to prevent the caving in of the earth; floor this cellar with plank, and wainscot it overhead for a ceiling, raise a roof of spars clear up, and cover the spars with bark or green sods, so that they can live dry and warm in these houses with their entire families for two, three, and four years, it being understood that partitions are run through those cellars which are adapted to the size of the family. The wealthy and principal men in New England, in the beginning of the colonics, commenced their first dwelling houses in this fashion for two reasons; firstly, in order not to waste time in building, and not to want food the next season; secondly, in order not to discourage poor laboring people whom they brought over in numbers from Fatherland. In the course of three or four years, when the country became adapted to agriculture, they built themselves handsome houses, spending on them several thousands."

In this course which our ancestors took there was a show of prudence at least, as if their principle were to satisfy the more pressing wants first. But are the more pressing wants satisfied now? When I think of acquiring for myself one of our luxurious dwellings, I am deterred, for, so to speak, the country is not yet adapted to *human* culture, and we are still forced to cut our *spiritual* bread far thinner than our forefathers did their wheaten. Not that all architectural ornament is to be neglected even in the rudest periods; but let our houses first be lined with beauty, where they come in contact with our lives, like the tenement of the shellfish, and not overlaid with it.

<sup>81</sup> Edward Johnson's *History of New England* (1654) was popularly known by the title which Thoreau uses.

<sup>82</sup> Cornelis van Tienhoven. See E. B. O'Callaghan's *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York*, I, 365.

But, alas! I have been inside one or two of them, and know what they are lined with.

Though we are not so degenerate but that we might possibly live in a cave or a wigwam or wear skins to-day, it certainly is better to accept the advantages, though so dearly bought, which the invention and industry of mankind offer. In such a neighborhood as this, boards and shingles, lime and bricks, are cheaper and more easily obtained than suitable caves, or whole logs, or bark in sufficient quantities, 10 or even well-tempered clay or flat stones. I speak understandingly on this subject, for I have made myself acquainted with it both theoretically and practically. With a little more wit we might use these materials so as to become richer than the richest now are, and make our civilization a blessing. The civilized man is a more experienced and wiser savage. But to make haste to my own experiment.

Near the end of March, 1845, I borrowed an axe 20 and went down to the woods by Walden Pond, nearest to where I intended to build my house, and began to cut down some tall arrowy white pines, still in their youth, for timber. It is difficult to begin without borrowing, but perhaps it is the most generous course thus to permit your fellow-men to have an interest in your enterprise. The owner of the axe, as he released his hold on it, said that it was the apple of his eye; but I returned it sharper than I received it. It was a pleasant hillside where I worked, 30 covered with pine woods, through which I looked out on the pond, and a small open field in the woods where pines and hickories were springing up. The ice in the pond was not yet dissolved, though there were some open spaces, and it was all dark colored and saturated with water. There were some slight flurries of snow during the days that I worked there; but for the most part when I came out on to the railroad, on my way home, its yellow sand heap stretched away gleaming in the hazy atmosphere, and 40 the rails shone in the spring sun, and I heard the lark and pewee and other birds already come to commence another year with us. They were pleasant spring days, in which the winter of man's discontent<sup>83</sup> was thawing as well as the earth, and the life that had lain torpid began to stretch itself. One day, when my axe had come off and I had cut a green hickory for a

wedge, driving it with a stone, and had placed the whole to soak in a pond hole in order to swell the wood, I saw a striped snake run into the water, and he lay on the bottom, apparently without inconvenience, as long as I staid there, or more than a quarter of an hour; perhaps because he had not yet fairly come out of the torpid state. It appeared to me that for a like reason men remain in their present low and primitive condition; but if they should feel the influence of the spring of springs arousing them, they would of necessity rise to a higher and more ethereal life. I had previously seen the snakes in frosty mornings in my path with portions of their bodies still numb and inflexible, waiting for the sun to thaw them. On the 1st of April it rained and melted the ice, and in the early part of the day, which was very foggy, I heard a stray goose groping about over the pond and cackling as if lost, or like the spirit of the fog.

So I went on for some days cutting and hewing timber, and also studs and rafters, all with my narrow axe, not having many communicable or scholar-like thoughts, singing to myself,—

Men say they know many things;  
But lo! they have taken wings,—  
The arts and sciences,  
And a thousand appliances;  
The wind that blows  
Is all that any body knows.

I hewed the main timbers six inches square, most of the studs on two sides only, and the rafters and floor timbers on one side, leaving the rest of the bark on, so that they were just as straight and much stronger than sawed ones. Each stick was carefully mortised or tenoned by its stump, for I had borrowed other tools by this time. My days in the woods were not very long ones; yet I usually carried my dinner of bread and butter, and read the newspaper<sup>84</sup> in which it was wrapped, at noon, sitting amid the green pine boughs which I had cut off, and to my bread was imparted some of their fragrance, for my hands were covered with a thick coat of pitch. Before I had done I was more the friend than the foe of the pine tree, though I had cut down some of them, having become better acquainted with it. Sometimes a rambler in the wood

<sup>83</sup> An adaptation of the opening line of Shakespeare's *Richard III*.

<sup>84</sup> While Thoreau repeatedly expressed his contempt for the material contents of newspapers, "few residents of Concord frequented the Post Office more punctually or read the newspapers (particularly the *New York Tribune*) more eagerly than Thoreau."—F. B. Sanborn.

was attracted by the sound of my axe, and we chatted pleasantly over the chips which I had made.

By the middle of April, for I made no haste in my work, but rather made the most of it, my house was framed and ready for the raising. I had already bought the shanty of James Collins, an Irishman who worked on the Fitchburg Railroad, for boards. James Collins' shanty was considered an uncommonly fine one. When I called to see it he was not at home. I walked about the outside, at first unobserved from within, the window was so deep and high. It was of small dimensions, with a peaked cottage roof, and not much else to be seen, the dirt being raised five feet all around as if it were a compost heap. The roof was the soundest part, though a good deal warped and made brittle by the sun. Doorsill there was none, but a perennial passage for the hens under the door board. Mrs. C. came to the door and asked me to view it from the inside. The hens were driven in by my approach. It was dark, and had a dirt floor for the most part, dank, clammy, and aguish, only here a board and there a board which would not bear removal. She lighted a lamp to show me the inside of the roof and the walls, and also that the board floor extended under the bed, warning me not to step into the cellar, a sort of dust hole two feet deep. In her own words, they were "good boards overhead, good boards all around, and a good window,"—of two whole squares originally, only the cat had passed out that way lately. There was a stove, a bed, and a place to sit, an infant in the house where it was born, a silk parasol, gilt-framed looking-glass, and a patent new coffee mill nailed to an oak sapling, all told. The bargain was soon concluded, for James had in the mean while returned. I to pay four dollars and twenty-five cents to-night, he to vacate at five to-morrow morning, selling to nobody else meanwhile: I to take possession at six. It were well, he said, to be there early, and anticipate certain indistinct but wholly unjust claims on the score of ground rent and fuel. This he assured me was the only encumbrance. At six I passed him and his family on the road. One large bundle held their all,—bed, coffee-mill, looking-glass, hens,—all but the cat, she took to the woods and became a wild cat, and, as I learned afterward, trod in a trap set for woodchucks, and so became a dead cat at last.

I took down this dwelling the same morning, drawing the nails, and removed it to the pond side by

small cartloads, spreading the boards on the grass there to bleach and warp back again in the sun. One early thrush gave me a note or two as I drove along the woodland path. I was informed treacherously by a young Patrick that neighbor Secley, an Irishman, in the intervals of the carting, transferred the still tolerable, straight, and drivable nails, staples, and spikes to his pocket, and then stood when I came back to pass the time of day, and look freshly up, unconcerned, with spring thoughts, at the devastation; there being a dearth of work, as he said. He was there to represent spectatordom, and help make this seemingly insignificant event one with the removal of the gods of Troy.

I dug my cellar in the side of a hill sloping to the south, where a woodchuck had formerly dug his burrow, down through sumach and blackberry roots, and the lowest stain of vegetation, six feet square by seven deep, to a fine sand where potatoes would not freeze in any winter. The sides were left shelving, and not stoned; but the sun having never shone on them, the sand still keeps its place. It was but two hours' work. I took particular pleasure in this breaking of ground, for in almost all latitudes men dig into the earth for an equable temperature. Under the most splendid house in the city is still to be found the cellar where they store their roots as of old, and long after the superstructure has disappeared posterity remark its dent in the earth. The house is still but a sort of porch at the entrance of a burrow.

At length, in the beginning of May, with the help of some of my acquaintances, rather to improve so good an occasion for neighborliness than from any necessity, I set up the frame of my house. No man was ever more honored in the character of his raisers<sup>85</sup> than I. They are destined, I trust, to assist at the raising of loftier structures one day. I began to occupy my house on the 4th of July, as soon as it was boarded and roofed, for the boards were carefully feather-edged and lapped, so that it was perfectly impervious to rain; but before boarding I laid the foundation of a chimney at one end, bringing two cartloads of stones up the hill from the pond in my arms. I built the chimney after my hocking in the fall, before a fire became necessary for warmth, doing my cooking in the mean while out of doors on the

<sup>85</sup> The "raisers" who assisted Thoreau were Emerson, Alcott, W. E. Channing, Burrill and George Curtis, Edmund Hosmer, and his sons John, Edmund, and Andrew.

ground, early in the morning: which mode I still think is in some respects more convenient and agreeable than the usual one. When it stormed before my bread was baked, I fixed a few boards over the fire, and sat under them to watch my loaf, and passed some pleasant hours in that way. In those days, when my hands were much employed, I read but little, but the least scraps of paper which lay on the ground, my holder, or tablecloth, afforded me as much entertainment, in fact answered the same purpose as the *Iliad*.

It would be worth the while to build still more deliberately than I did, considering, for instance, what foundation a door, a window, a cellar, a garret, have in the nature of man, and perchance never raising any superstructure until we found a better reason for it than our temporal necessities even. There is some of the same fitness in a man's building his own house that there is in a bird's building its own nest. Who knows but if men constructed their dwellings with their own hands, and provided food for themselves and families simply and honestly enough, the poetic faculty would be universally developed, as birds universally sing when they are so engaged? But alas! we do like cowbirds and cuckoos, which lay their eggs in nests which other birds have built, and cheer no traveller with their chattering and unmusical notes. Shall we forever resign the pleasure of construction to the carpenter? What does architecture amount to in the experience of the mass of men? I never in all my walks came across a man engaged in so simple and natural an occupation as building his house. We belong to the community. It is not the tailor alone who is the ninth part of a man; it is as much the preacher, and the merchant, and the farmer. Where is this division of labor to end? and what object does it finally serve? No doubt another may also think for me; but it is not therefore desirable that he should do so to the exclusion of my thinking for myself.

True, there are architects so called in this country, and I have heard of one at least possessed with the idea of making architectural ornaments have a core of truth, a necessity, and hence a beauty, as if it were a revelation to him.<sup>86</sup> All very well perhaps from his

<sup>86</sup> As the *Journal* for January 11, 1852 (IX, 181-83) indicates, this passage is based on some observations made by Horatio Greenough, the sculptor, in a letter to Emerson, which Thoreau had read.

point of view, but only a little better than the common dilettantism. A sentimental reformer in architecture, he began at the cornice, not at the foundation. It was only how to put a core of truth within the ornaments, that every sugar plum in fact might have an almond or caraway seed in it,—though I hold that almonds are most wholesome without the sugar,—and not how the inhabitant, the indweller, might build truly within and without, and let the ornaments take care of themselves. What reasonable man ever supposed that ornaments were something outward and in the skin merely,—that the tortoise got his spotted shell, or the shellfish its mother-of-pearl tints, by such a contract as the inhabitants of Broadway their Trinity Church? But a man has no more to do with the style of architecture of his house than a tortoise with that of its shell: nor need the soldier be so idle as to try to paint the precise color of his virtue on his standard. The enemy will find it out. He may turn pale when the trial comes. This man seemed to me to lean over the cornice, and timidly whisper his half truth to the rude occupants who really knew it better than he. What of architectural beauty I now see, I know has gradually grown from within outward, out of the necessities and character of the indweller,<sup>87</sup> who is the only builder,—out of some unconscious truthfulness, and nobleness, without ever a thought for the appearance; and whatever additional beauty of this kind is destined to be produced will be preceded by a like unconscious beauty of life. The most interesting dwellings in this country, as the painter knows, are the most unpretending, humble log huts and cottages of the poor commonly; it is the life of the inhabitants whose shells they are, and not any peculiarity in their surfaces merely, which makes them *picturesque*; and equally interesting will be the citizen's suburban box, when his life shall be as simple and as agreeable to the imagination, and there is as little straining after effect in the style of his dwelling. A great proportion of architectural ornaments are literally hollow, and a September gale would strip them off, like borrowed plumes, without injury to the substantials. They can

<sup>87</sup> Professor Bartholow V. Crawford, in the *American Writers Series* edition of Thoreau, p. 362, has observed that there is "a distinct flavor of Ruskin about this discussion of the spiritual values of architecture. Ruskin was no Carlyle in Thoreau's eyes. He questioned the genuineness of Ruskin's contacts with Nature. . . . Nevertheless, he shows thorough familiarity with Ruskin's writings, and here expresses the idea at the base of *Stones of Venice* and *Lamps of Architecture*."

do without *architecture* who have no olives nor wines in the cellar. What if an equal ado were made about the ornaments of style in literature, and the architects of our bibles spent as much time about their cornices as the architects of our churches do? So are made the *belles-lettres*<sup>88</sup> and the *beaux-arts*<sup>89</sup> and their professors. Much it concerns a man, forsooth, how a few sticks are slanted over him or under him, and what colors are daubed upon his box. It would signify somewhat, if, in any earnest sense, *he* slanted 10 them and daubed it; but the spirit having departed out of the tenant, it is of a piece with constructing his own coffin,—the architecture of the grave,—and carpenter” is but another name for “coffin-maker.” One man says, in his despair or indifference to life, take up a handful of the earth at your feet, and paint your house that color. Is he thinking of his last and narrow house? Toss up a copper for it as well. What an abundance of leisure he must have! Why do you take up a handful of dirt? Better paint your house 20 your own complexion; let it turn pale or blush for you. An enterprise to improve the style of cottage architecture! When you have got my ornaments ready I will wear them.

Before winter I built a chimney, and shingled the sides of my house, which were already impervious to rain, with imperfect and sappy shingles made of the first slice of the log, whose edges I was obliged to straighten with a plane.

I have thus a tight shingled and plastered house, 30 ten feet wide by fifteen long, and eight-foot posts, with a garret and a closet, a large window on each side, two trap doors, one door at the end, and a brick fireplace opposite. The exact cost of my house, paying the usual price for such materials as I used, but not counting the work, all of which was done by myself, was as follows; and I give the details because very few are able to tell exactly what their houses cost, and fewer still, if any, the separate cost of the various materials which compose them:—

Boards, . . . . .	\$8 03½, mostly shanty boards.
Refuse shingles for roof	
and sides, . . . . .	4 00
Laths, . . . . .	1 25
Two second-hand windows	
with glass, . . . . .	2 43
One thousand old brick, .	4 00
Two casks of lime, . . .	2 40

That was high.

<sup>88</sup> Polite letters.

<sup>89</sup> Fine arts.

Hair, . . . . .	0 31	More than I needed.
Mantle-tree iron, . . .	0 15	
Nails, . . . . .	3 90	
Hinges and screws, . . .	0 14	
Latch, . . . . .	0 10	
Chalk, . . . . .	0 01	
Transportation, . . . .	1 40	{ I carried a good part on my back.
In all, . . . . .	\$28 12½	

These are all the materials excepting the timber, stones and sand, which I claimed by squatter's right. I have also a small wood-shed adjoining, made chiefly of the stuff which was left after building the house.

I intend to build me a house which will surpass any on the main street in Concord in grandeur and luxury, as soon as it pleases me as much and will cost me no more than my present one.

I thus found that the student who wishes for a shelter can obtain one for a lifetime at an expense not greater than the rent which he now pays annually. If I seem to boast more than is becoming, my excuse is that I brag for humanity rather than for myself; and my shortcomings and inconsistencies do not affect the truth of my statement. Notwithstanding much cant and hypocrisy,—chaff which I find it difficult to separate from my wheat, but for which I am as sorry as any man,—I will breathe freely and stretch myself in this respect, it is such a relief to both the moral and physical system; and I am resolved that I will not through humility become the devil's attorney. I will endeavor to speak a good word for the truth. At Cambridge College the mere rent of a student's room, which is only a little larger than my own, is thirty dollars each year, though the corporation had the advantage of building thirty-two side by side and under one roof, and the occupant suffers the inconvenience of many and noisy neighbors, and perhaps a residence in the fourth story.<sup>90</sup> I cannot but think that if we had more true wisdom in 40 these respects, not only less education would be needed, because, forsooth, more would already have been acquired, but the pecuniary expense of getting an education would in a great measure vanish. Those conveniences which the student requires at Cambridge or elsewhere cost him or somebody else ten times as great a sacrifice of life as they would with proper management on both sides. Those things for

<sup>90</sup> Thoreau had himself lived in a fourth-floor room in Hollis Hall.

which the most money is demanded are never the things which the student most wants. Tuition, for instance, is an important item in the term bill, while for the far more valuable education which he gets by associating with the most cultivated of his contemporaries no charge is made. The mode of founding a college is, commonly, to get up a subscription of dollars and cents, and then following blindly the principles of a division of labor to its extreme, a principle which should never be followed but with circumspection,—to call in a contractor who makes this a subject of speculation, and he employs Irishmen or other operatives actually to lay the foundations, while the students that are to be are said to be fitting themselves for it; and for these oversights successive generations have to pay. I think that it would be *better than this*, for the students, or those who desire to be benefited by it, even to lay the foundation themselves. The student who secures his coveted leisure and retirement by systematically shirking any labor necessary to man obtains but an ignoble and unprofitable leisure, defrauding himself of the experience which alone can make leisure fruitful. “But,” says one, “you do not mean that the students should go to work with their hands instead of their heads?” I do not mean that exactly, but I mean something which he might think a good deal like that; I mean that they should not *play* life, or *study* it merely, while the community supports them at this expensive game, but earnestly *live* it from beginning to end. How could youths better learn to live than by at once trying the experiment of living? Methinks this would exercise their minds as much as mathematics. If I wished a boy to know something about the arts and sciences, for instance, I would not pursue the common course, which is merely to send him into the neighborhood of some professor, where any thing is professed and practised but the art of life;—to survey the world through a telescope or a microscope, and never with his natural eye; to study chemistry, and not learn how his bread is made, or mechanics, and not learn how it is earned; to discover new satellites to Neptune, and not detect the moles in his eyes, or to what vagabond he is a satellite himself; or to be devoured by the monsters that swarm all around him, while contemplating the monsters in a drop of vinegar. Which would have advanced the most at the end of a month,—the boy who had made his own

jackknife from the ore which he had dug and smelted, reading as much as would be necessary for this,—or the boy who had attended the lectures on metallurgy at the Institute in the mean while, and had received a Rodgers’ penknife<sup>91</sup> from his father? Which would be most likely to cut his fingers? . . . To my astonishment I was informed on leaving college that I had studied navigation!—why, if I had taken one turn down the harbor I should have known more about it. Even the *poor* student studies and is taught only *political* economy, while that economy of living which is synonymous with philosophy is not even sincerely professed in our colleges. The consequence is, that while he is reading Adam Smith,<sup>92</sup> Ricardo,<sup>93</sup> and Say,<sup>94</sup> he runs his father in debt irreticvably.

As with our colleges, so with a hundred “modern improvements,” there is an illusion about them; there is not always a positive advance. The devil goes on exacting compound interest to the last for his early share and numerous succeeding investments in them. Our inventions are wont to be pretty toys, which distract our attention from serious things. They are but improved means to an unimproved end, an end which it was already but too easy to arrive at; as railroads lead to Boston or New York. We are in great haste to construct a magnetic telegraph from Maine to Texas;<sup>95</sup> but Maine and Texas, it may be, have nothing important to communicate. Either is in such a predicament as the man who was earnest to be introduced to a distinguished deaf woman,<sup>96</sup> but when he was presented, and one end of her ear trumpet was put into his hand, had nothing to say. As if the main object were to talk fast and not to talk sensibly. We are eager to tunnel under the Atlantic and bring the old world some weeks nearer to the new; but perchance the first news that will leak through into the broad, flapping American ear will be that the Princess Adelaide has the whooping cough. After all, the man whose horse trots a mile in a minute does not carry the most important messages; he is not an evangelist, nor does he come round

<sup>91</sup> Made by the famous firm of James Rodgers and Sons in Sheffield, England.

<sup>92</sup> Adam Smith (1723–90), Scotch political economist.

<sup>93</sup> David Ricardo (1772–1823), English political economist.

<sup>94</sup> Jean Baptiste Say (1767–1832), French political economist.

<sup>95</sup> Between 1840, when New York, Baltimore, and Washington were connected by the electric telegraph, and 1850, more than fifty telegraph companies were established.

<sup>96</sup> A reference to Harriet Martineau, who visited Concord in 1836–37.

eating locusts and wild honey. I doubt if Flying Childers <sup>97</sup> ever carried a peck of corn to mill.

One says to me, "I wonder that you do not lay up money; you love to travel; you might take the cars and go to Fitchburg to-day and see the country." But I am wiser than that. I have learned that the swiftest traveler is he that goes afoot. I say to my friend, Suppose we try who will get there first. The distance is thirty miles; the fare ninety cents. That is almost a day's wages. I remember when wages were sixty cents a day for laborers on this very road. Well, I start now on foot, and get there before night; I have travelled at that rate by the week together. You will in the mean while have earned your fare, and arrive there some time to-morrow, or possibly this evening, if you are lucky enough to get a job in season. Instead of going to Fitchburg, you will be working here the greater part of the day. And so, if the railroad reached round the world, I think that I should keep ahead of you; and as for seeing the country and getting <sup>20</sup> experience of that kind, I should have to cut your acquaintance altogether.

Such is the universal law, which no man can ever outwit, and with regard to the railroad even we may say it is as broad as it is long. To make a railroad round the world available to all mankind is equivalent to grading the whole surface of the planet. Men have an indistinct notion that if they keep up this activity of joint stocks and spades long enough all will at length ride somewhere, in next to no time, and for <sup>30</sup> nothing; but though a crowd rushes to the depot, and the conductor shouts "All aboard!" when the smoke is blown away and the vapor condensed, it will be perceived that a few are riding, but the rest are run over,—and it will be called, and will be, "A melancholy accident." No doubt they can ride at last who shall have earned their fare, that is, if they survive so long, but they will probably have lost their elasticity and desire to travel by that time. This spending of the best part of one's life earning money <sup>40</sup> in order to enjoy a questionable liberty during the least valuable part of it, reminds me of the Englishman who went to India to make a fortune first, in order that he might return to England and live the life of a poet. He should have gone up garret at once. "What!" exclaim a million Irishmen starting up from all the shanties in the land, "is not this railroad

<sup>97</sup> A famous English race horse.

which we have built a good thing?" Yes, I answer, *comparatively* good, that is, you might have done worse; but I wish, as you are brothers of mine, that you could have spent your time better than digging in this dirt.

Before I finished my house, wishing to earn ten or twelve dollars by some honest and agreeable method, in order to meet my unusual expenses, I planted about two acres and a half of light and sandy soil near it chiefly with beans,<sup>98</sup> but also a small part with potatoes, corn, peas, and turnips. The whole lot contains eleven acres, mostly growing up to pines and hickories, and was sold the preceding season for eight dollars and eight cents an acre. One farmer said that it was "good for nothing but to raise cheeping squirrels on." I put no manure whatever on this land, not being the owner, but merely a squatter, and not expecting to cultivate so much again, and I did not quite hoe it all once. I got out several cords of stumps in ploughing, which supplied me with fuel for a long time, and left small circles of virgin mould, easily distinguishable through the summer by the greater luxuriance of the beans there. The dead and for the most part unmerchantable wood behind my house, and the driftwood from the pond, have supplied the remainder of my fuel. I was obliged to hire a team and a man for the ploughing, though I held the plough myself. My farm outgoes for the first season were, for implements, seed, work, &c., \$14.72½. The seed corn was given me. This never costs any thing to speak of, unless you plant more than enough. I got twelve bushels of beans, and eighteen bushels of potatoes, beside some peas and sweet corn. The yellow corn and turnips were too late to come to any thing. My whole income from the farm was

	\$23 44.
Deducting the outgoes, . . . . .	14 72½
There are left, . . . . .	\$ 8 71½,

beside produce consumed and on hand at the time this estimate was made of the value of \$4.50,—the amount on hand much more than balancing a little grass which I did not raise. All things considered, that is, considering the importance of a man's soul and of to-day, notwithstanding the short time occu-

<sup>98</sup> This crop was harvested on land belonging to Emerson. Later Emerson had Thoreau plant pines on this plot.



pied by my experiment, nay, partly even because of its transient character, I believe that that was doing better than any farmer in Concord did that year.

The next year I did better still, for I spaded up all the land which I required, about a third of an acre, and I learned from the experience of both years, not being in the least awed by many celebrated works on husbandry, Arthur Young<sup>99</sup> among the rest, that if one would live simply and eat only the crop which he raised, and raise no more than he ate, and not exchange it for an insufficient quantity of more luxurious and expensive things, he would need to cultivate only a few rods of ground, and that it would be cheaper to spade up that than to use oxen to plough it, and to select a fresh spot from time to time than to manure the old, and he could do all his necessary farm work as it were with his left hand at odd hours in the summer; and thus he would not be tied to an ox, or horse, or cow, or pig, as at present. I desire to speak impartially on this point, and as one not interested in the success or failure of the present economical and social arrangements. I was more independent than any farmer in Concord, for I was not anchored to a house or farm, but could follow the bent of my genius, which is a very crooked one, every moment. Beside being better off than they already, if my house had been burned or my crops had failed, I should have been nearly as well off as before.

I am wont to think that men are not so much the keepers of herds as herds are the keepers of men. The former are so much the freer. Men and oxen exchange work; but if we consider necessary work only, the oxen will be seen to have greatly the advantage, their farm is so much the larger. Man does some of his part of the exchange work in his six weeks of haying, and it is no boy's play. Certainly no nation that lived simply in all respects, that is, no nation of philosophers, would commit so great a blunder as to use the labor of animals. True, there never was and is not likely soon to be a nation of philosophers, nor am I certain it is desirable that there should be. However, I should never have broken a horse or bull and taken him to board for any work he might do for me, for fear I should become a horse-man or a herds-man merely; and if society seems to be the gainer by so

doing, are we certain that what is one man's gain is not another's loss, and that the stable-boy has equal cause with his master to be satisfied? Granted that some public works would not have been constructed without this aid, and let man share the glory of such with the ox and horse; does it follow that he could not have accomplished works yet more worthy of himself in that case? When men begin to do, not merely unnecessary or artistic, but luxurious and idle work, with their assistance, it is inevitable that a few do all the exchange work with the oxen, or, in other words, become the slaves of the strongest. Man thus not only works for the animal within him, but, for a symbol of this, he works for the animal without him. Though we have many substantial houses of brick or stone, the prosperity of the farmer is still measured by the degree to which the barn overshadows the house. This town is said to have the largest houses for oxen, cows, and horses hercabouts, and it is not behindhand in its public buildings; but there are very few halls for free worship or free speech in this country. It should not be by their architecture, but why not even by their power of abstract thought, that nations should seek to commemorate themselves? How much more admirable the Bhagvat-Geeta<sup>100</sup> than all the ruins of the East! Towers and temples are the luxury of princes. A simple and independent mind does not toil at the bidding of any prince. Genius is not a retainer to any emperor, nor is its material silver, or gold, or marble, except to a trifling extent. To what end, pray, is so much stone hammered? In Arcadia, when I was there, I did not see any hammering stone. Nations are possessed with an insane ambition to perpetuate the memory of themselves by the amount of hammered stone they leave. What if equal pains were taken to smooth and polish their manners? One piece of good sense would be more memorable than a monument as high as the moon. I love better to see stones in place. The grandeur of Thebes was a vulgar grandeur. More sensible is a rod of stone wall that bounds an honest man's field than a hundred-gated Thebes that has wandered farther from the true end of life. The religion and civilization which are barbaric and heathenish build

<sup>99</sup> Arthur Young (1741-1820), author of *The Farmer's Guide in Hiring and Stocking Farms*, London, 1770.

<sup>100</sup> The "Bhagavad-Gita," the Song of the Blessed One, is a philosophical dialogue inserted in the *Mahabharata*, containing a divine revelation from Krishna and constitutes the supreme devotional scripture of India. Thoreau was well-read in Oriental scriptures.

splendid temples; but what you might call Christianity does not. Most of the stone a nation hammers goes toward its tomb only. It buries itself alive. As for the Pyramids, there is nothing to wonder at in them so much as the fact that so many men could be found degraded enough to spend their lives constructing a tomb for some ambitious booby, whom it would have been wiser and manlier to have drowned in the Nile, and then given his body to the dogs. I might possibly invent some excuse for them and him, but I have no time for it. As for the religion and love of art of the builders, it is much the same all the world over, whether the building be an Egyptian temple or the United States Bank. It costs more than it comes to. The mainspring is vanity, assisted by the love of garlic and bread and butter. Mr. Balcom, a promising young architect, designs it on the back of his Vitruvius, with hard pencil and ruler, and the job is let out to Dobson & Sons, stonecutters. When the thirty centuries begin to look down on it,<sup>101</sup> mankind begin to look up at it. As for your high towers and monuments, there was a crazy fellow once in this town who undertook to dig through to China, and he got so far that, as he said, he heard the Chinese pots and kettles rattle; but I think that I shall not go out of my way to admire the hole which he made. Many are concerned about the monuments of the West and the East,—to know who built them. For my part, I should like to know who in those days did not build them,—who were above such trifling. But to proceed with my statistics.

By surveying, carpentry, and day-labor of various other kinds in the village in the mean while, for I have as many trades as fingers, I had earned \$13 34. The expense of food for eight months, namely, from July 4th to March 1st, the time when these estimates were made, though I lived there more than two years,—not counting potatoes, a little green corn, and some peas, which I had raised, nor considering the value of what was on hand at the last date, was 40

Rice, . . . \$1 73½<sup>102</sup>  
 Molasses, . . . 1 73 Cheapest form of the saccharine.  
 Rye meal, . . . 1 04¾  
 Indian meal, . . . 0 99¾ Cheaper than rye.

<sup>101</sup> A reference to a speech by Napoleon to his soldiers in Egypt, when, referring to the Pyramids, he reminded them that forty centuries were looking down upon them.

<sup>102</sup> These fractions are whimsical additions which do not occur in the manuscript.

Pork, . . . . .	0 22	Costs more than Indian meal, both money and trouble.	All experiments which failed.
Flour, . . . . .	0 88		
Sugar, . . . . .	0 80		
Lard, . . . . .	0 65		
Apples, . . . . .	0 25		
Dried apple, . . . . .	0 22		
Sweet potatoes, . . . . .	0 10		
One pumpkin, . . . . .	0 6		
One watermelon, . . . . .	0 2		
Salt, . . . . .	0 3		

Yes, I did eat \$8 74, all told; but I should not thus unblushingly publish my guilt, if I did not know that most of my readers were equally guilty with myself, and that their deeds would look no better in print. The next year I sometimes caught a mess of fish for my dinner, and once I went so far as to slaughter a woodchuck which ravaged my bean-field,—effect his transmigration, as a Tartar would say,—and devour him, partly for experiment's sake; but though it afforded me a momentary enjoyment, notwithstanding a musky flavor, I saw that the longest use would not make that a good practice, however it might seem to have your woodchucks ready dressed by the village butcher.

Clothing and some incidental expenses within the same dates, though little can be inferred from this item, amounted to

\$ 8 40¾

Oil and some household utensils, . . . 2 00

So that all the pecuniary outgoes, excepting for washing and mending, which for the most part were done out of the house, and their bills have not yet been received,—and these are all and more than all the ways by which money necessarily goes out in this part of the world,—were

House, . . . . . \$28 12½  
 Farm one year, . . . . . 14 72½  
 Food eight months, . . . . . 8 74  
 Clothing, &c., eight months, . . . . . 8 40¾  
 Oil, &c., eight months, . . . . . 2 00  
 In all, . . . . . \$61 99¾

I address myself now to those of my readers who have a living to get. And to meet this I have for farm produce sold

\$23 44

Earned by day-labor, . . . . . 13 34  
 In all, . . . . . \$36 78,

which subtracted from the sum of the outgoes leaves a balance of \$25 21¾ on the one side,—this being very nearly the means with which I started, and the measure of expenses to be incurred,—and on the other, beside the leisure and independence and health thus secured, a comfortable house for me as long as I choose to occupy it.

These statistics, however accidental and therefore uninformative they may appear, as they have a certain completeness, have a certain value also. Nothing was given me of which I have not rendered some account. It appears from the above estimate, that my food alone cost me in money about twenty-seven cents a week. It was, for nearly two years after this, rye and Indian meal without yeast, potatoes, rice, a very little salt pork, molasses, and salt, and my drink water. It was fit that I should live on rice, mainly, who loved so well the philosophy of India. To meet the objections of some inveterate cavillers, I may as well state, that if I dined out occasionally,<sup>103</sup> 20 as I always had done, and I trust shall have opportunities to do again, it was frequently to the detriment of my domestic arrangements. But the dining out, being, as I have stated, a constant element, does not in the least affect a comparative statement like this.

I learned from my two years' experience that it would cost incredibly little trouble to obtain one's necessary food, even in this latitude; that a man may use as simple a diet as the animals, and yet retain health and strength. I have made a satisfactory dinner, satisfactory on several accounts, simply off a dish of purslane (*Portulaca oleracea*) which I gathered in my cornfield, boiled and salted. I give the Latin on account of the savoriness of the trivial name. And pray what more can a reasonable man desire, in peaceful times, in ordinary noons, than a sufficient number of ears of green sweet-corn boiled, with the addition of salt? Even the little variety which I used was a yielding to the demands of appetite, and not of health. Yet men have come to such a pass that 40 they frequently starve, not for want of necessities, but for want of luxuries; and I know a good woman who thinks that her son lost his life because he took to drinking water only.

The reader will perceive that I am treating the subject rather from an economic than a dietetic point of

<sup>103</sup> Besides such meals as he ate at his home in Concord, it was Thoreau's custom while at Walden to dine on Sundays with Emerson and to stop at Hosmer's on his way back to Walden Pond often remaining for supper.

view, and he will not venture to put my abstemiousness to the test unless he has a well-stocked larder.

Bread I at first made of pure Indian meal and salt, genuine hoe-cakes, which I baked before my fire out of doors on a shingle or the end of a stick of timber sawed off in building my house; but it was wont to get smoked and to have a piny flavor. I tried flour also; but have at last found a mixture of rye and Indian meal most convenient and agreeable. In cold weather it was no little amusement to bake several small loaves of this in succession, tending and turning them as carefully as an Egyptian his hatching eggs.<sup>104</sup> They were a real cereal fruit which I ripened, and they had to my senses a fragrance like that of other noble fruits, which I kept in as long as possible by wrapping them in cloths. I made a study of the ancient and indispensable art of bread-making, consulting such authorities as offered, going back to the primitive days and first invention of the unleavened kind, when from the wildness of nuts and meats men first reached the mildness and refinement of this diet, and travelling gradually down in my studies through that accidental souring of the dough which, it is supposed, taught the leavening process, and through the various fermentations thereafter, till I came to "good, sweet, wholesome bread," the staff of life. Leaven, which some deem the soul of bread, the *spiritus* which fills its cellular tissue, which is religiously preserved like the vestal fire,—some precious bottle-full, I suppose, first brought over in the Mayflower, did the business for America, and its influence is still rising, swelling, spreading, in cereal billows over the land,—this seed I regularly and faithfully procured from the village, till at length one morning I forgot the rules, and scalded my yeast; by which accident I discovered that even this was not indispensable,—for my discoveries were not by the synthetic but analytic process,—and I have gladly omitted it since, though most housewives earnestly assured me that safe and wholesome bread without yeast might not be, and elderly people prophesied a speedy decay of the vital forces. Yet I find it not to be an essential ingredient, and after going without it for a year am still in the land of the living; and I am glad to escape the trivialness of carrying a bottle-full in my pocket, which would sometimes pop and discharge its contents to my discomfiture. It is simpler and more respectable

<sup>104</sup> The Egyptians have traditionally preferred artificial to natural methods of hatching eggs.

to omit it. Man is an animal who more than any other can adapt himself to all climates and circumstances. Neither did I put any sal soda, or other acid or alkali, into my bread. It would seem that I made it according to the recipe which Marcus Porcius Cato gave about two centuries before Christ.<sup>105</sup> "Panem depsticum sic facito. Manus mortariumque bene lavato. Farinam in mortarium indito, aquæ paulatim addito, subigitoque pulchre. Ubi bene subegeris, defingito, coquitoque sub testu." Which I take to mean 10 —"Make kneaded bread thus. Wash your hands and trough well. Put the meal into the trough, add water gradually, and knead it thoroughly. When you have kneaded it well, mould it, and bake it under a cover," that is, in a baking-kettle. Not a word about leaven. But I did not always use this staff of life. At one time, owing to the emptiness of my purse, I saw none of it for more than a month.

Every New Englander might easily raise all his own bread-stuffs in this land of rye and Indian corn, 20 and not depend on distant and fluctuating markets for them. Yet so far are we from simplicity and independence that, in Concord, fresh and sweet meal is rarely sold in the shops, and hominy and corn in a still coarser form are hardly used by any. For the most part the farmer gives to his cattle and hogs the grain of his own producing, and buys flour, which is at least no more wholesome, at a greater cost, at the store. I saw that I could easily raise my bushel or two of rye and Indian corn, for the former will grow on 30 the poorest land, and the latter does not require the best, and grind them in a hand-mill, and so do without rice and pork; and if I must have some concentrated sweet, I found by experiment that I could make a very good molasses either of pumpkins or beets, and I know that I needed only to set out a few maples to obtain it more easily still, and while these were growing I could use various substitutes beside those which I have named. "For," as the Forefathers sang,—

"we can make liquor to sweeten our lips  
Of pumpkins and parsnips and walnut-tree chips." 106

Finally, as for salt, that grossest of groceries, to obtain this might be a fit occasion for a visit to the seashore, or, if I did without it altogether, I should

<sup>105</sup> A reference to Cato's *De Agri Cultura*, cap. 74.

<sup>106</sup> Quoted from "New England's Annoyances," reputed to be the oldest known composition in English verse by an American colonist.

probably drink the less water. I do not learn that the Indians ever troubled themselves to go after it.

Thus I could avoid all trade and barter, so far as my food was concerned, and having a shelter already, it would only remain to get clothing and fuel. The pantaloons which I now wear were woven in a farmer's family,—thank Heaven there is so much virtue still in man; for I think the fall from the farmer to the operative as great and memorable as that from the man to the farmer;—and in a new country fuel is an encumbrance. As for a habitat, if I were not permitted still to squat, I might purchase one acre at the same price for which the land I cultivated was sold—namely, eight dollars and eight cents. But as it was, I considered that I enhanced the value of the land by squatting on it.

There is a certain class of unbelievers who sometimes ask me such questions as, if I think that I can live on vegetable food alone; and to strike at the root of the matter at once,—for the root is faith,—I am accustomed to answer such, that I can live on board nails. If they cannot understand that, they cannot understand much that I have to say. For my part, I am glad to hear of experiments of this kind being tried; as that a young man tried for a fortnight to live on hard, raw corn on the ear, using his teeth for all mortar. The squirrel tribe tried the same and succeeded. The human race is interested in these experiments, though a few old women who are incapacitated for them, or who own their thirds in mills, may be alarmed.

My furniture, part of which I made myself, and the rest cost me nothing of which I have not rendered an account, consisted of a bed, a table, a desk, three chairs, a looking-glass three inches in diameter, a pair of tongs and andirons, a kettle, a skillet, and a frying-pan, a dipper, a wash-bowl, two knives and forks, three plates, one cup, one spoon, a jug for oil, 40 a jug for molasses, and a japanned lamp. None is so poor that he need sit on a pumpkin. That is shiftlessness. There is a plenty of such chairs as I like best in the village garrets to be had for taking them away. Furniture! Thank God, I can sit and I can stand without the aid of a furniture warehouse. What man but a philosopher would not be ashamed to see his furniture packed in a cart and going up country exposed to the light of heaven and the eyes of men, a beggarly account of empty boxes? That is Spauld-

ing's furniture. I could never tell from inspecting such a load whether it belonged to a so called rich man or a poor one; the owner always seemed poverty-stricken. Indeed, the more you have of such things the poorer you are. Each load looks as if it contained the contents of a dozen shanties; and if one shanty is poor, this is a dozen times as poor. Pray, for what do we *move* ever but to get rid of our furniture, our *exuviae*; <sup>107</sup> at last to go from this world to another newly furnished, and leave this to be burned? It is the same as if all these traps were buckled to a man's belt, and he could not move over the rough country where our lines are cast without dragging them,—dragging his trap. He was a lucky fox that left his tail in the trap. The muskrat will gnaw his third leg off to be free. <sup>108</sup> No wonder man has lost his elasticity. How often he is at a dead set! "Sir, if I may be so bold, what do you mean by a dead set?" If you are a seer, whenever you meet a man you will see all that he owns, ay, and much that he pretends to disown, behind him, even to his kitchen furniture and all the trumpery which he saves and will not burn, and he will appear to be harnessed to it and making what headway he can. I think that the man is at a dead set who has got through a knot hole or gateway where his sledge load of furniture cannot follow him. I cannot but feel compassion when I hear some trig, compact-looking man, seemingly free, all girded and ready, speak of his "furniture," as whether it is insured or not. "But what shall I do with my furniture?" My gay butterfly is entangled in a spider's web then. Even those who seem for a long while not to have any, if you inquire more narrowly you will find have some stored in somebody's barn. I look upon England to-day as an old gentleman who is travelling with a great deal of baggage, trumpery which has accumulated from long house-keeping, which he has not the courage to burn; great trunk, little trunk, bandbox and bundle. Throw away the first three at least. It would surpass the powers <sup>40</sup> of a well man nowadays to take up his bed and walk, and I should certainly advise a sick one to lay down his bed and run. When I have met an immigrant tottering under a bundle which contained his all—looking like an enormous wen which had grown out of the nape of his neck—I have pitied him, not be-

cause that was his all, but because he had all *that* to carry. If I have got to drag my trap, I will take care that it be a light one and do not nip me in a vital part. But perchance it would be wisest never to put one's paw into it.

I would observe, by the way, that it costs me nothing for curtains, for I have no gazers to shut out but the sun and moon, and I am willing that they should look in. The moon will not sour milk nor taint meat of mine, nor will the sun injure my furniture or fade my carpet, and if he is sometimes too warm a friend, I find it still better economy to retreat behind some curtain which nature has provided, than to add a single item to the details of housekeeping. A lady once offered me a mat, but as I had no room to spare within the house, nor time to spare within or without to shake it, I declined it, preferring to wipe my feet on the sod before my door. It is best to avoid the beginnings of evil.

Not long since I was present at the auction of a deacon's effects, for his life had not been ineffectual:—

The evil that men do lives after them. <sup>109</sup>

As usual, a great proportion was trumpery which had begun to accumulate in his father's day. Among the rest was a dried tapeworm. And now, after lying half a century in his garret and other dust holes, these things were not burned; instead of a *bonfire*, or purifying destruction of them, there was an *auction*, or increasing of them. The neighbors eagerly collected to view them, bought them all, and carefully transported them to their garrets and dust holes, to lie there till their estates are settled when they will start again. When a man dies he kicks the dust.

The customs of some savage nations might, perchance, be profitably imitated by us, for they at least go through the semblance of casting their slough annually; they have the idea of the thing, whether they have the reality or not. Would it not be well if we were to celebrate such a "busk," or "feast of first fruits," as Bartram <sup>110</sup>—describes to have been the custom of the Mucclasse Indians? "When a town celebrates the busk," says he, "having previously provided themselves with new clothes, new pots, pans, and other household utensils and furniture, they col-

<sup>107</sup> Literally, what is drawn off, or taken off, from the body.

<sup>108</sup> See the *Journal*, VII, 481 (undated), where Thoreau records such an instance.

<sup>109</sup> *Julius Caesar*, III, ii, 80.

<sup>110</sup> William Bartram (1739–1823), author of *Travels Through North and South Carolina, Georgia, East and West Florida* . . . Philadelphia, 1791, pp. 507–8.

lect all their worn out clothes and other despicable things, sweep and cleanse their houses, squares, and the whole town, of their filth, which with all the remaining grain and other old provisions they cast together into one common heap, and consume it with fire. After having taken medicine, and fasted for three days, all the fire in the town is extinguished. During this fast they abstain from the gratification of every appetite and passion whatever. A general amnesty is proclaimed; all malefactors may return to their town.—”<sup>111</sup>

“On the fourth morning, the high priest, by rubbing dry wood together, produces new fire in the public square, from whence every habitation in the town is supplied with the new and pure flame.”

They then feast on the new corn and fruits and dance and sing for three days, “and the four following days they receive visits and rejoice with their friends from neighboring towns who have in like manner purified and prepared themselves.”<sup>112</sup>

The Mexicans<sup>113</sup> also practised a similar purification at the end of every fifty-two years, in the belief that it was time for the world to come to an end.

I have scarcely heard of a truer sacrament, that is, as the dictionary defines it, “outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace,” than this, and I have no doubt that they were originally inspired directly from Heaven to do thus, though they have no biblical record of the revelation.

For more than five years I maintained myself thus solely by the labor of my hands, and I found, that by working about six weeks in a year, I could meet all the expenses of living. The whole of my winters, as well as most of my summers, I had free and clear for study. I have thoroughly tried school-keeping, and found that my expenses were in proportion, or rather out of proportion, to my income, for I was obliged to dress and train, not to say think and believe,<sup>40</sup> accordingly, and I lost my time into the bargain. As I did not teach for the good of my fellow-men, but simply for a livelihood, this was a failure. I have tried trade; but I found that it would take ten years to get

under way in that, and that then I should probably be on my way to the devil. I was actually afraid that I might by that time be doing what is called a good business. When formerly I was looking about to see what I could do for a living, some sad experience in conforming to the wishes of friends being fresh in my mind to tax my ingenuity, I thought often and seriously of picking huckleberries; that surely I could do, and its small profits might suffice,—for my greatest skill has been to want but little,—so little capital it required, so little distraction from my wonted moods, I foolishly thought. While my acquaintances went unhesitatingly into trade or the professions, I contemplated this occupation as most like theirs; ranging the hills all summer to pick the berries which came in my way, and thereafter carelessly dispose of them; so, to keep the flocks of Admetus. I also dreamed that I might gather the wild herbs, or carry evergreens to such villagers as loved to be reminded of the woods, even to the city, by hay-cart loads. But I have since learned that trade curses every thing it handles; and though you trade in messages from heaven, the whole curse of trade attaches to the business.

As I preferred some things to others, and especially valued my freedom, as I could fare hard and yet succeed well, I did not wish to spend my time in earning rich carpets or other fine furniture, or delicate cookery or a house in the Grecian or the Gothic style just yet. If there are any to whom it is no interruption to acquire these things, and who know how to use them when acquired, I relinquish to them the pursuit. Some are “industrious,” and appear to love labor for its own sake, or perhaps because it keeps them out of worse mischief; to such I have at present nothing to say. Those who would not know what to do with more leisure than they now enjoy, I might advise to work twice as hard as they do,—work till they pay for themselves, and get their free papers. For myself I found that the occupation of a day-laborer was the most independent of any, especially as it required only thirty or forty days in a year to support one. The laborer’s day ends with the going down of the sun, and he is then free to devote himself to his chosen pursuit, independent of his labor; but his employer, who speculates from month to month, has no respite from one end of the year to the other.

In short, I am convinced, both by faith and experience, that to maintain one’s self on this earth is

<sup>111</sup> The passage in *ibid.*, pp. 507–8 reads: “to their town, and they are absolved from their crimes, which are now forgiven, and they restored to favor.”

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 508.

<sup>113</sup> See W. H. Prescott, *History of the Conquest of Mexico*, bk. I, chap. v.

not a hardship but a pastime,<sup>114</sup> if we will live simply and wisely; as the pursuits of the simpler nations are still the sports of the more artificial. It is not necessary that a man should earn his living by the sweat of his brow, unless he sweats easier than I do.

One young man of my acquaintance, who has inherited some acres, told me that he thought he should live as I did, *if he had the means*. I would not have any one adopt *my* mode of living on any account; for, beside that before he has fairly learned it I may have found out another for myself, I desire that there may be as many different persons in the world as possible; but I would have each one be very careful to find out and pursue *his own* way, and not his father's or his mother's or his neighbor's instead. The youth may build or plant or sail, only let him not be hindered from doing that which he tells me he would like to do. It is by a mathematical point only that we are wise, as the sailor or the fugitive slave keeps the polestar in his eye; but that is sufficient guidance for all our life. We may not arrive at our port within a calculable period, but we would preserve the true course.

Undoubtedly, in this case, what is true for one is truer still for a thousand, as a large house is not proportionally more expensive than a small one, since one roof may cover, one cellar underlie, and one wall separate several apartments. But for my part, I preferred the solitary dwelling. Moreover, it will commonly be cheaper to build the whole yourself than to convince another of the advantage of the common wall; and when you have done this, the common partition, to be much cheaper, must be a thin one, and that other may prove a bad neighbor, and also not keep his side in repair. The only coöperation which is commonly possible is exceedingly partial and superficial; and what little true coöperation there is, is as if it were not, being a harmony inaudible to men. If a man has faith he will coöperate with equal faith every where; if he has not faith, he will continue to live like the rest of the world, whatever company he is joined to. To coöperate, in the highest as well as the lowest sense, means *to get our living together*. I heard it proposed lately that two young men should travel together over the world, the one without money, earning his means as he went, before the mast and behind the plough, the other carrying a bill of exchange in his pocket. It was easy to see

that they could not long be companions or coöperate, since one would not *operate* at all. They would part at the first interesting crisis in their adventures. Above all, as I have implied, the man who goes alone can start to-day; but he who travels with another must wait till that other is ready, and it may be a long time before they get off.

But all this is very selfish, I have heard some of my townsmen say. I confess that I have hitherto indulged very little in philanthropic enterprises. I have made some sacrifices to a sense of duty, and among others have sacrificed this pleasure also. There are those who have used all their arts to persuade me to undertake the support of some poor family in the town; and if I had nothing to do,—for the devil finds employment for the idle,—I might try my hand at some such pastime as that. However, when I have thought to indulge myself in this respect, and lay their Heaven under an obligation by maintaining certain poor persons in all respects as comfortably as I maintain myself, and have even ventured so far as to make them the offer, they have one and all unhesitatingly preferred to remain poor. While my townsmen and women are devoted in so many ways to the good of their fellows, I trust that one at least may be spared to other and less humane pursuits. You must have a genius for charity as well as for any thing else. As for Doing-good, that is one of the professions which are full. Moreover, I have tried it fairly, and, strange as it may seem, am satisfied that it does not agree with my constitution. Probably I should not consciously and deliberately forsake my particular calling to do the good which society demands of me, to save the universe from annihilation; and I believe that a like but infinitely greater steadfastness elsewhere is all that now preserves it. But I would not stand between any man and his genius; and to him who does this work, which I decline, with his whole heart and soul and life, I would say, Persevere, even if the world call it doing evil, as it is most likely they will.

I am far from supposing that my case is a peculiar one; no doubt many of my readers would make a similar defence. At doing something,—I will not engage that my neighbors shall pronounce it good,—I do not hesitate to say that I should be a capital fellow to hire; but what that is, it is for my employer to find out. What *good* I do, in the common sense

<sup>114</sup> See *Journals*, XVI, 145 (October 29, 1857).

of that word, must be aside from my main path, and for the most part wholly unintended. Men say, practically, Begin where you are and such as you are, without aiming mainly to become of more worth, and with kindness aforethought go about doing good. If I were to preach at all in this strain, I should say rather, Set about being good. As if the sun should stop when he had kindled his fires up to the splendor of a moon or a star of the sixth magnitude, and go about like a Robin Goodfellow, peeping in at every cottage window, inspiring lunatics, and tainting meats, and making darkness visible, instead of steadily increasing his genial heat and beneficence till he is of such brightness that no mortal can look him in the face, and then, and in the mean while too, going about the world in his own orbit, doing it good, or rather, as a truer philosophy has discovered, the world going about him getting good. When Phaeton,<sup>115</sup> wishing to prove his heavenly birth by his beneficence, had the sun's chariot but one day, and drove out of the beaten track, he burned several blocks of houses in the lower streets of heaven, and scorched the surface of the earth, and dried up every spring, and made the great desert of Sahara, till at length Jupiter hurled him headlong to the earth with a thunderbolt, and the sun, through grief at his death, did not shine for a year.

There is no odor so bad as that which arises from goodness tainted. It is human, it is divine, carrion. If I knew for a certainty that a man was coming to my house with the conscious design of doing me good, I should run for my life, as from that dry and parching wind of the African deserts called the simoom which fills the mouth and nose and ears and eyes with dust till you are suffocated, for fear that I should get some of his good done to me,—some of its virus mingled with my blood. No,—in this case I would rather suffer evil the natural way. A man is not a good *man* to me because he will feed me if I should be starving, or warm me if I should be freezing, or pull me out of a ditch if I should ever fall into one. I can find you a Newfoundland dog that will do as much. Philanthropy is not love for one's fellow-man in the broadest sense. Howard<sup>116</sup> was no doubt an exceedingly kind and worthy man

in his way, and has his reward; but, comparatively speaking, what are a hundred Howards to *us*, if their philanthropy do not help *us* in our best estate, when we are most worthy to be helped? I never heard of a philanthropic meeting in which it was sincerely proposed to do any good to me, or the like of me.

The Jesuits were quite balked by those Indians who, being burned at the stake, suggested new modes of torture to their tormentors. Being superior to physical suffering, it sometimes chanced that they were superior to any consolation which the missionaries could offer; and the law to do as you would be done by fell with less persuasiveness on the ears of those, who, for their part, did not care how they were done by, who loved their enemies after a new fashion, and came very near freely forgiving them all they did.

Be sure that you give the poor the aid they most need, though it be your example which leaves them far behind. If you give money, spend yourself with it, and do not merely abandon it to them. We make curious mistakes sometimes. Often the poor man is not so cold and hungry as he is dirty and ragged and gross. It is partly his taste, and not merely his misfortune. If you give him money, he will perhaps buy more rags with it. I was wont to pity the clumsy Irish laborers who cut ice on the pond, in such mean and ragged clothes, while I shivered in my more tidy and somewhat more fashionable garments, till, one bitter cold day, one who had slipped into the water came to my house to warm him, and I saw him strip off three pairs of pants and two pairs of stockings ere he got down to the skin, though they were dirty and ragged enough, it is true, and that he could afford to refuse the *extra* garments which I offered him, he had so many *intra* ones. This ducking was the very thing he needed. Then I began to pity myself, and I saw that it would be a greater charity to bestow on me a flannel shirt than a whole slop-shop on him. There are a thousand hacking at the branches of evil to one who is striking at the root, and it may be that he who bestows the largest amount of time and money on the needy is doing the most by his mode of life to produce that misery which he strives in vain to relieve. It is the pious slave-breeder devoting the proceeds of every tenth slave to buy a Sunday's liberty for the rest. Some show their kindness to the poor by employing them in their kitchens. Would they not be kinder if they

<sup>115</sup> Phaeton was the son of Helios, permitted for a day to drive the chariot of the Sun, and would have set the world on fire if Zeus had not struck him down with a thunderbolt.

<sup>116</sup> John Howard (1726?–1790), active in the reform of prison conditions.



employed themselves there? You boast of spending a tenth part of your income in charity; may be you should spend the nine tenths so, and done with it. Society recovers only a tenth part of the property then. Is this owing to the generosity of him in whose possession it is found, or to the remissness of the officers of justice?

Philanthropy is almost the only virtue which is sufficiently appreciated by mankind. Nay, it is greatly overrated; and it is our selfishness which overrates it. A robust poor man, one sunny day here in Concord, praised a fellow-townsmen to me, because as he said, he was kind to the poor; meaning himself. The kind uncles and aunts of the race are more esteemed than its true spiritual fathers and mothers. I once heard a reverend lecturer on England, a man of learning and intelligence, after enumerating her scientific, literary, and political worthies, Shakspeare, Bacon, Cromwell, Milton, Newton, and others, speak next of her Christian heroes, whom, as if his profession required it of him, he elevated to a place far above all the rest, as the greatest of the great. They were Penn,<sup>117</sup> Howard and Mrs. Fry.<sup>118</sup> Every one must feel the falsehood and cant of this. The last were not England's best men and women; only, perhaps, her best philanthropists.

I would not subtract any thing from the praise that is due to philanthropy, but merely demand justice for all who by their lives and works are a blessing to mankind. I do not value chiefly a man's uprightness and benevolence, which are, as it were, his stem and leaves. Those plants of whose greenness withered we make herb tea for the sick, serve but a humble use, and are most employed by quacks. I want the flower and fruit of a man; that some fragrance be wafted over from him to me, and some ripeness flavor our intercourse. His goodness must not be a partial and transitory act, but a constant superfluity, which costs him nothing and of which he is unconscious. This is a charity that hides a multitude of sins. The philanthropist too often surrounds mankind with the remembrance of his own cast-off griefs as an atmosphere, and calls it sympathy. We should impart our courage, and not our despair, our health and ease, and not our disease, and take care that this does not spread by contagion. From what southern plains

comes up the voice of wailing? Under what latitudes reside the heathen to whom we would send light? Who is that intemperate and brutal man whom we would redeem? If any thing ail a man, so that he does not perform his functions, if he have a pain in his bowels even,—for that is the seat of sympathy,—he forthwith sets about reforming—the world. Being a microcosm himself, he discovers, and it is a true discovery, and he is the man to make it,—that the world has been eating green apples; to his eyes, in fact, the globe itself is a great green apple, which there is danger awful to think of that the children of men will nibble before it is ripe; and straightway his drastic philanthropy seeks out the Esquimaux and the Patagonian, and embraces the populous Indian and Chinese villages; and thus, by a few years of philanthropic activity, the powers in the mean while using him for their own ends, no doubt, he cures himself of his dyspepsia, the globe acquires a faint blush on one or both of its cheeks, as if it were beginning to be ripe, and life loses its crudity and is once more sweet and wholesome to live. I never dreamed of any enormity greater than I have committed. I never knew, and never shall know, a worse man than myself.

I believe that what so saddens the reformer is not his sympathy with his fellows in distress, but, though he be the holiest son of God, is his private ail. Let this be righted, let the spring come to him, the morning rise over his couch, and he will forsake his generous companions without apology. My excuse for not lecturing against the use of tobacco is, that I never chewed it; that is a penalty which reformed tobacco-chewers have to pay; though there are things enough I have chewed, which I could lecture against. If you should ever be betrayed into any of these philanthropies, do not let your left hand know what your right hand does, for it is not worth knowing. Rescue the drowning and tie your shoe-strings. Take your time, and set about some free labor.

Our manners have been corrupted by communication with the saints. Our hymn-books resound with a melodious cursing of God and enduring him forever. One would say that even the prophets and redeemers had rather consoled the fears than confirmed the hopes of man. There is nowhere recorded a simple and irrepressible satisfaction with the gift of life, any memorable praise of God. All health and success does me good, however far off and withdrawn

<sup>117</sup> William Penn (1644–1718), founder of Pennsylvania.

<sup>118</sup> Elizabeth Fry (1780–1845), Englishwoman devoted to the amelioration of prison conditions.

it may appear; all disease and failure helps to make me sad and does me evil, however much sympathy it may have with me or I with it. If, then, we would indeed restore mankind by truly Indian, botanic, magnetic, or natural means, let us first be as simple and well as Nature ourselves, dispel the clouds which hang over our own brows, and take up a little life into our pores. Do not stay to be an overseer of the poor, but endeavor to become one of the worthies of the world.

I read in the *Gulistan*, or Flower Garden, of Sheik Sadi<sup>119</sup> of Shiraz, that "They asked a wise man, saying; Of the many celebrated trees which the Most High God has created lofty and umbrageous, they call none azad, or free, excepting the cypress, which bears no fruit; what mystery is there in this? He replied; Each has its appropriate produce, and appointed season, during the continuance of which it is fresh and blooming, and during their absence dry and withered; to neither of which states is the cypress exposed, being always flourishing; and of this nature are the azads, or religious independents.—Fix not thy heart on that which is transitory; for the Dijlah, or Tigris, will continue to flow through Bagdad after the race of caliphs is extinct: if thy hand has plenty, be liberal as the date tree; but if it affords nothing to give away, be an azad, or free man, like the cypress."

### Where I Lived, and What I Lived For

#### (CHAPTER II)

At a certain season of our life we are accustomed to consider every spot as the possible site of a house. I have thus surveyed the country on every side within a dozen miles of where I live. In imagination I have bought all the farms in succession, for all were to be bought, and I knew their price. I walked over each farmer's premises, tasted his wild apples, discoursed on husbandry with him, took his farm at his price,<sup>40</sup> at any price, mortgaging it to him in my mind; even put a higher price on it,—took every thing but a deed of it,—took his word for his deed, for I dearly love to talk,—cultivated it, and him too to some extent, I trust, and withdrew when I had enjoyed it long enough, leaving him to carry it on. This experience

entitled me to be regarded as a sort of real-estate broker by my friends. Wherever I sat, there I might live, and the landscape radiated from me accordingly. What is a house but a *sedes*, a seat?—better if a country scat. I discovered many a site for a house not likely to be soon improved, which some might have thought too far from the village, but to my eyes the village was too far from it. Well, there I might live, I said; and there I did live, for an hour, a summer<sup>10</sup> and a winter life; saw how I could let the years run off, buffet the winter through, and see the spring come in. The future inhabitants of this region, wherever they may place their houses, may be sure that they have been anticipated. An afternoon sufficed to lay out the land into orchard, woodlot, and pasture, and to decide what fine oaks or pines should be left to stand before the door, and whence each blasted tree could be seen to the best advantage; and then I let it lie, fallow perchance, for a man is rich in proportion to the number of things which he can afford to let alone.

My imagination carried me so far that I even had the refusal of several farms,—the refusal was all I wanted,—but I never got my fingers burned by actual possession. The nearest that I came to actual possession was when I bought the Hollowell place,<sup>120</sup> and had begun to sort my seeds, and collected materials with which to make a wheelbarrow to carry it on or off with; but before the owner gave me a deed of<sup>30</sup> it, his wife—every man has such a wife—changed her mind and wished to keep it, and he offered me ten dollars to release him. Now, to speak the truth, I had but ten cents in the world, and it surpassed my arithmetic to tell, if I was that man who had ten cents, or who had a farm, or ten dollars, or all together. However, I let him keep the ten dollars and the farm too, for I had carried it far enough; or rather, to be generous, I sold him the farm for just what I gave for it, and, as he was not a rich man, made him a present of ten dollars, and still had my ten cents, and seeds, and materials for a wheelbarrow left. I found thus that I had been a rich man without any damage to my poverty. But I retained the landscape, and I have since annually carried off what it yielded without a wheelbarrow. With respect to landscapes,—

<sup>119</sup> Saadi (c. 1184–1291), greatest of the Persian poets, author of *Bustan* ("Fruit Garden"), *Gulistan* ("Rose Garden"), and *Divan*, a collection of lyric poetry.

<sup>120</sup> A house just off the road to Nine-Acre Corner, and facing the Musketaquid River. Thoreau had known the place from boyhood.

I am monarch of all I survey,  
My right there is none to dispute.<sup>121</sup>

I have frequently seen a poet withdraw, having enjoyed the most valuable part of a farm, while the crusty farmer supposed that he had got a few wild apples only. Why, the owner does not know it for many years when a poet has put his farm in rhyme,<sup>122</sup> the most admirable kind of invisible fence, has fairly impounded it, milked it, skimmed it, and got all the cream, and left the farmer only the skimmed milk. 10

The real attractions of the Hollowell farm, to me, were; its complete retirement, being about two miles from the village, half a mile from the nearest neighbor, and separated from the highway by a broad field; its bounding on the river, which the owner said protected it by its fogs from frosts in the spring, though that was nothing to me; the gray color and ruinous state of the house and barn, and the dilapidated fences, which put such an interval between me and the last occupant; the hollow and lichen- 20 covered apple trees, gnawed by rabbits, showing what kind of neighbors I should have; but above all, the recollection I had of it from my earliest voyages<sup>123</sup> up the river, when the house was concealed behind a dense grove of red maples, through which I heard the house-dog bark. I was in haste to buy it, before the proprietor finished getting out some rocks, cutting down the hollow apple trees, and grubbing up some young birches which had sprung up in the pasture, or, in short, had made any more of his improvements. 30 To enjoy these advantages I was ready to carry it on; like Atlas,<sup>124</sup> to take the world on my shoulders,—I never heard what compensation he received for that,—and do all those things which had no other motive or excuse but that I might pay for it and be unmolested in my possession of it; for I knew all the while that it would yield the most abundant crop of the kind I wanted if I could only afford to let it alone. But it turned out as I have said.

All that I could say, then, with respect to farming 40

<sup>121</sup> From Cowper's poem "Imaginary Verses of Alexander Selkirk." Thoreau seems to enjoy the pun on his vacation as a surveyor.

<sup>122</sup> See Emerson's lines from "The Apology" (1846):

"One harvest from Thy field  
Homeward brought the oxen strong;  
A second crop thine acres yield,  
Which I gather in a song."

<sup>123</sup> A reference to his trip up the Concord and Merrimack Rivers in 1839.

<sup>124</sup> Atlas was a Titan in Greek mythology who was condemned to stand at the western end of the earth and hold up the heavens.

on a large scale, (I have always cultivated a garden,) was, that I had had my seeds ready. Many think that seeds improve with age. I have no doubt that time discriminates between the good and the bad; and when at last I shall plant, I shall be less likely to be disappointed. But I would say to my fellows, once for all, As long as possible live free and uncommitted. It makes but little difference whether you are committed to a farm or the county jail.

Old Cato, whose "De Re Rusticá"<sup>125</sup> is my "Cultivator," says, and the only translation I have seen makes sheer nonsense of the passage, "When you think of getting a farm, turn it thus in your mind, not to buy greedily; nor spare your pains to look at it, and do not think it enough to go round it once. The oftener you go there the more it will please you, if it is good." I think I shall not buy greedily, but go round and round it as long as I live, and be buried in it first, that it may please me the more at last.

The present was my next experiment of this kind, which I purpose to describe more at length; for convenience, putting the experience of two years into one. As I have said, I do not propose to write an ode to dejection,<sup>126</sup> but to brag as lustily as chanticleer in the morning, standing on his roost, if only to wake my neighbors up.

When first I took up my abode in the woods, that is, began to spend my nights as well as days there, which, by accident, was on Independence day, or the fourth of July, 1845, my house was not finished for winter, but was merely a defence against the rain, without plastering or chimney, the walls being of rough weather-stained boards, with wide chinks, which made it cool at night. The upright white hewn studs and freshly planed door and window casings gave it a clean and airy look, especially in the morning, when its timbers were saturated with dew, so that I fancied that by noon some sweet gum would exude from them. To my imagination it retained throughout the day more or less of this auroral<sup>127</sup> character, reminding me of a certain house on a mountain which I had visited the year before. This was an airy and unplastered cabin, fit to entertain a travelling god, and where a goddess might trail her

<sup>125</sup> The reference is to *De Re Rustica*, chap. I, a treatise on farm management, by Marcus Porcius Cato (234-149 B.C.).

<sup>126</sup> A reference to Samuel Taylor Coleridge's "Dejection: An Ode."

<sup>127</sup> Rosy, radiant, bright.

garments. The winds which passed over my dwelling were such as sweep over the ridges of mountains, bearing the broken strains, or celestial parts only, of terrestrial music. The morning wind forever blows, the poem of creation is uninterrupted; but few are the ears that hear it. Olympus is but the outside of the earth every where.

The only house I had been the owner of before, if I except a boat, was a tent,<sup>128</sup> which I used occasionally when making excursions in the summer, and this is still rolled up in my garret; but the boat, after passing from hand to hand, has gone down the stream of time.<sup>129</sup> With this more substantial shelter about me, I had made some progress toward settling in the world. This frame, so slightly clad, was a sort of crystallization around me, and reacted on the builder. It was suggestive somewhat as a picture in outlines. I did not need to go out doors to take the air, for the atmosphere within had lost none of its freshness. It was not so much within doors as behind a door where I sat, even in the rainiest weather. The *Harivansa*<sup>130</sup> says, "An abode without birds is like a meat without seasoning." Such was not my abode, for I found myself suddenly neighbor to the birds; not by having imprisoned one, but having caged myself near them. I was not only nearer to some of those which commonly frequent the garden and the orchard, but to those wilder and more thrilling songsters of this forest which never, or rarely, serenade a villager,—the wood-thrush, the veery, the scarlet tanager, the field-sparrow, the whippoorwill, and many others.

I was seated by the shore of a small pond, about a mile and a half south of the village of Concord and somewhat higher than it, in the midst of an extensive wood between that town and Lincoln;<sup>131</sup> and about two miles south of that our only field known to fame, Concord Battle Ground;<sup>132</sup> but I was so low in the woods that the opposite shore, half a mile

off, like the rest, covered with wood, was my most distant horizon. For the first week, whenever I looked out on the pond it impressed me like a tarn high up on the side of a mountain, its bottom far above the surface of other lakes, and, as the sun arose, I saw it throwing off its nightly clothing of mist, and here and there, by degrees, its soft ripples or its smooth reflecting surface was revealed, while the mists, like ghosts, were stealthily withdrawing in every direction into the woods, as at the breaking up of some nocturnal conventicle. The very dew seemed to hang upon the trees later into the day than usual, as on the sides of mountains.

This small lake was of most value as a neighbor in the intervals of a gentle rain storm in August, when, both air and water being perfectly still, but the sky overcast, mid-afternoon had all the serenity of evening, and the wood-thrush sang around, and was heard from shore to shore. A lake like this is never smoother than at such a time; and the clear portion of the air above it being shallow and darkened by clouds, the water, full of light and reflections, becomes a lower heaven itself so much the more important. From a hill top near by, where the wood had been recently cut off, there was a pleasing vista southward across the pond, through a wide indentation in the hills which form the shore there, where their opposite sides sloping toward each other suggested a stream flowing out in that direction through a wooded valley, but stream there was none. That way I looked between and over the near green hills to some distant and higher ones in the horizon, tinged with blue. Indeed, by standing on tiptoe I could catch a glimpse of some of the peaks of the still bluer and more distant mountain ranges in the northwest, those true-blue coins from heaven's own mint, and also of some portion of the village. But in other directions, even from this point, I could not see over or beyond the woods which surrounded me. It is well to have some water in your neighborhood, to give buoyancy to and float the earth. One value even of the smallest well is, that when you look into it you see that earth is not continent but insular. This is as important as that it keeps butter cool. When I looked across the pond from this peak toward the Sudbury meadows,<sup>133</sup> which in time of flood

<sup>128</sup> The tent used by Henry and John Thoreau on the trip described in *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*.

<sup>129</sup> The boat, made by the two brothers and named the *Musketaquid*, was bought by Hawthorne in 1843. *Musketaquid* was the name of an Indian settlement on the site of Concord.

<sup>130</sup> The "*Harivansa*," like the "*Bhagavad-Gita*," is a part of the great Indian epic, *Alahabharata*. Some 16,000 verses in length, it is devoted largely to the life and adventures of Krishna as an incarnation of the god Vishnu, and relates the future of the world. It is generally believed to have originated in the fifth century A.D.

<sup>131</sup> Lincoln on the Sudbury Road.

<sup>132</sup> Commemorated by Emerson in a poem, the "Concord Hymn."

<sup>133</sup> According to F. B. Sanborn Thoreau's favorite walk was along the Marlborough Road west and southwest from Concord and through the woods along Sudbury River, which, with the Assabet, forms the Concord River.

I distinguished elevated perhaps by a mirage in their seething valley, like a coin in a basin, all the earth beyond the pond appeared like a thin crust insulated and floated even by this small sheet of intervening water, and I was reminded that this on which I dwelt was but *dry land*.

Though the view from my door was still more contracted, I did not feel crowded or confined in the least. There was pasture enough for my imagination. The low shrub-oak plateau to which the opposite shore arose, stretched away toward the prairies of the West and the steppes of Tartary,<sup>134</sup> affording ample room for all the roving families of men. "There are none happy in the world but beings who enjoy freely a vast horizon,"—said Damodara,<sup>135</sup> when his herds required new and larger pastures.

Both place and time were changed, and I dwelt nearer to those parts of the universe and to those eras in history which had most attracted me. Where I lived was as far off as many a region viewed nightly by astronomers. We are wont to imagine rare and delectable places in some remote and more celestial corner of the system, behind the constellation of Cassiopeia's Chair,<sup>136</sup> far from noise and disturbance. I discovered that my house actually had its site in such a withdrawn, but forever new and unprofaned, part of the universe. If it were worth the while to settle in those parts near to the Pleiades<sup>137</sup> or the Hyades,<sup>138</sup> to Aldebaran or Altair,<sup>139</sup> then I was really there, or at an equal remoteness from the life which I had left behind, dwindled and twinkling with as fine a ray to my nearest neighbor, and to be seen only in moonless nights by him. Such was that part of creation where I had squatted;—

There was a shepherd that did live,  
And held his thoughts as high  
As were the mounts whereon his flocks  
Did hourly feed him by.

What should we think of the shepherd's life if his flocks always wandered to higher pastures than his thoughts?

Every morning was a cheerful invitation to make my life of equal simplicity, and I may say innocenc,

<sup>134</sup> The region of Asia and Europe from the Sea of Japan to the Dnieper River.

<sup>135</sup> Damodara Misra, an eleventh-century Sanskrit poet.

<sup>136</sup> A constellation of thirty larger stars.

<sup>137</sup> A group of smaller stars in the constellation Taurus.

<sup>138</sup> A cluster of stars in Taurus, of which Aldebaran is the brightest.

<sup>139</sup> A star in the constellation Aquilae.

with Nature herself. I have been as sincere a worshipper of Aurora<sup>140</sup> as the Greeks. I got up early and bathed in the pond; that was a religious exercise, and one of the best things which I did. They say that characters were engraven on the bathing tub of king Tching-thang to this effect: "Renew thyself completely each day; do it again, and again, and forever again." I can understand that. Morning brings back the heroic ages. I was as much affected by the faint hum of a mosquito making its invisible and unimaginable tour through my apartment at earliest dawn, when I was sitting with door and windows open, as I could be by any trumpet that ever sang of fame. It was Homer's requiem; itself an Iliad and Odyssey in the air, singing its own wrath and wanderings.<sup>141</sup> There was something cosmical about it; a standing advertisement, till forbidden, of the everlasting vigor and fertility of the world. The morning, which is the most memorable season of the day, is the awakening hour. Then there is least somnolence in us; and for an hour, at least, some part of us awakes which slumbers all the rest of the day and night. Little is to be expected of that day, if it can be called a day, to which we are not awakened by our Genius,<sup>142</sup> but by the mechanical nudgings of some servitor, are not awakened by our own newly-acquired force and aspirations from within, accompanied by the undulations of celestial music, instead of factory bells, and a fragrance filling the air—to a higher life than we fell asleep from; and thus the darkness bear its fruit, and prove itself to be good, no less than the light. That man who does not believe that each day contains an earlier, more sacred, and auroral hour than he has yet profaned, has despaired of life, and is pursuing a descending and darkening way. After a partial cessation of his sensuous life, the soul of man, or its organs rather, are reinvigorated each day, and his Genius tries again what noble life it can make. All memorable events, I should say, transpire in morning time and in a morning atmosphere. The Vedas<sup>143</sup> say, "All intelligences awake with the morning." Poetry and art, and the fairest and most memorable of the actions of men, date from such an hour. All poets and heroes,

<sup>140</sup> The Greek goddess of the dawn.

<sup>141</sup> A reference to the *Iliad*, which relates to the wrath of Achilles, and the *Odyssey*, which records the wanderings of Odysseus.

<sup>142</sup> The genius or guardian spirit, as the guide of the individual.

<sup>143</sup> The Vedas are the devotional literature of the Hindus.

like Memnon,<sup>144</sup> are the children of Aurora, and emit their music at sunrise. To him whose elastic and vigorous thought keeps pace with the sun, the day is a perpetual morning. It matters not what the clocks say or the attitudes and labors of men. Morning is when I am awake and there is a dawn in me. Moral reform is the effort to throw off sleep. Why is it that men give so poor an account of their day if they have not been slumbering? They are not such poor calculators. If they had not been overcome with drowsiness 10 they would have performed something. The millions are awake enough for physical labor; but only one in a million is awake enough for effective intellectual exertion, only one in a hundred millions to a poetic or divine life. To be awake is to be alive. I have never yet met a man who was quite awake. How could I have looked him in the face?

We must learn to awaken and keep ourselves awake, not by mechanical aids, but by an infinite expectation of the dawn, which does not forsake us in 20 our soundest sleep. I know of no more encouraging fact than the unquestionable ability of man to elevate his life by a conscious endeavor. It is something to be able to paint a particular picture, or to carve a statue, and so to make a few objects beautiful; but it is far more glorious to carve and paint the very atmosphere and medium through which we look, which morally we can do. To affect the quality of the day, that is the highest of arts. Every man is tasked to make his life, even in its details, worthy of the contemplation 30 of his most elevated and critical hour. If we refused, or rather used up, such paltry information as we get, the oracles would distinctly inform us how this might be done.

I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived. I did not wish to live what was not life, living is so dear; nor did I wish to practise resignation, 40 unless it was quite necessary. I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life, to live so sturdily and Spartan-like<sup>145</sup> as to put to rout all that was not life, to cut a broad swath and shave close, to drive life into a corner, and reduce it to its lowest terms, and, if it proved to be mean, why then to get the

whole and genuine meanness of it, and publish its meanness to the world; or if it were sublime, to know it by experience, and be able to give a true account of it in my next excursion. For most men, it appears to me, are in a strange uncertainty about it, whether it is of the devil or of God, and have *somewhat hastily* concluded that it is the chief end of man here to "glorify God and enjoy him forever."<sup>146</sup>

Still we live meanly, like ants; though the fable tells us that we were long ago changed into men; like pygmies we fight with cranes;<sup>147</sup> it is error upon error, and clout upon clout, and our best virtue has for its occasion a superfluous and evitable wretchedness. Our life is frittered away by detail. An honest man has hardly need to count more than his ten fingers, or in extreme cases he may add his ten toes, and lump the rest. Simplicity, simplicity, simplicity! I say, let your affairs be as two or three, and not a hundred or a thousand; instead of a million count half a dozen, and keep your accounts on your thumb nail. In the midst of this chopping sea of civilized life, such are the clouds and storms and quicksands and thousand-and-one items to be allowed for, that a man has to live, if he would not founder and go to the bottom and not make his port at all, by dead reckoning,<sup>148</sup> and he must be a great calculator indeed who succeeds. Simplify, simplify. Instead of three meals a day, if it be necessary eat but one; instead of a hundred dishes, five; and reduce other things in proportion. Our life is like a German Confederacy,<sup>149</sup> made up of petty states, with its boundary forever fluctuating, so that even a German cannot tell you how it is bounded at any moment. The nation itself, with all its so called internal improvements, which, by the way, are all external and superficial, is just such an unwieldy and overgrown establishment, cluttered with furniture and tripped up by its own traps, ruined by luxury and heedless expense, by want of calculation and a worthy aim, as the million households in the land; and the only cure for it as for them is in a rigid economy, a stern and more than Spartan simplicity of life and elevation of purpose. It lives too fast. Men think that it is essen-

<sup>146</sup> From the Westminster Catechism.

<sup>147</sup> The battle of the cranes and the pygmies is famous in Greek story.

<sup>148</sup> A method of finding the position of a ship from a record of the courses sailed and the distance made on each course, rather than by computations based on astronomical observations.

<sup>149</sup> The loose German confederacy, formed in 1815, proved impracticable as a form of union.

<sup>144</sup> The statue in the temple at Memnon in Thebes which was said to emit harp-like sounds when struck by the rays of the sun.

<sup>145</sup> The ancient Spartans held to a rigid physical regimen.

tial that the *Nation* have commerce, and export ice, and talk through a telegraph, and ride thirty miles an hour, without a doubt, whether *they* do or not; but whether we should live like baboons or like men, is a little uncertain. If we do not get out sleepers,<sup>150</sup> and forge rails, and devote days and nights to the work, but go to tinkering upon our *lives* to improve *them*, who will build railroads? And if railroads are not built, how shall we get to heaven in season?<sup>151</sup> But if we stay at home and mind our business, who will want railroads? We do not ride on the railroad; it rides upon us. Did you ever think what those sleepers are that underlie the railroad? Each one is a man, an Irishman, or a Yankee man.<sup>152</sup> The rails are laid on them, and they are covered with sand, and the cars run smoothly over them. They are sound sleepers, I assure you. And every few years a new lot is laid down and run over; so that, if some have the pleasure of riding on a rail, others have the misfortune to be ridden upon. And when they run over a man that is walking in his sleep, a supernumerary sleeper in the wrong position, and wake him up, they suddenly stop the cars, and make a hue and cry about it, as if this were an exception. I am glad to know that it takes a gang of men for every five miles to keep the sleepers down and level in their beds as it is, for this is a sign that they may sometimes get up again.

Why should we live with such hurry and waste of life? We are determined to be starved before we are hungry. Men say that a stitch in time saves nine, and so they take a thousand stitches to-day to save nine to-morrow. As for *work*, we haven't any of any consequence. We have the Saint Vitus' dance,<sup>153</sup> and cannot possibly keep our heads still. If I should only give a few pulls at the parish bell-rope, as for a fire, that is, without setting the bell,<sup>154</sup> there is hardly a man on his farm in the outskirts of Concord, notwithstanding that press of engagements which was his excuse so many times this morning, nor a boy, nor a woman, I might almost say, but would forsake all and follow that sound, not mainly to save property from the flames, but, if we will confess the truth,

<sup>150</sup> Railway ties.

<sup>151</sup> Apparently an allusion to Hawthorne's story, "The Celestial Railroad."

<sup>152</sup> That is, laborers who built the roads.

<sup>153</sup> Chorea.

<sup>154</sup> That is a loud ringing of the bell so as to turn it over too far and get it hung.

much more to see it burn, since burn it must, and we, be it known, did not set it on fire,—or to see it put out, and have a hand in it, if that is done as handsomely; yes, even if it were the parish church itself. Hardly a man takes a half hour's nap after dinner, but when he wakes he holds up his head and asks, "What's the news?" as if the rest of mankind had stood his sentinels. Some give directions to be waked every half hour, doubtless for no other purpose; and then, to pay for it, they tell what they have dreamed. After a night's sleep the news is as indispensable as the breakfast. "Pray tell me any thing new that has happened to a man any where on this globe,"—and he reads it over his coffee and rolls, that a man has had his eyes gouged out this morning on the Wachito River,<sup>155</sup> never dreaming the while that he lives in the dark unfathomed mammoth cave<sup>156</sup> of this world, and has but the rudiment of an eye himself.

For my part, I could easily do without the post-office. I think that there are very few important communications made through it. To speak critically, I never received more than one or two letters in my life—I wrote this some years ago—that were worth the postage. The penny-post<sup>157</sup> is, commonly, an institution through which you seriously offer a man that penny for his thoughts which is so often safely offered in jest. And I am sure that I never read any memorable news in a newspaper. If we read of one man robbed, or murdered, or killed by accident, or one house burned, or one vessel wrecked, or one steamboat blown up, or one cow run over on the Western Railroad, or one mad dog killed, or one lot of grasshoppers in the winter,—we never need read of another. One is enough. If you are acquainted with the principle, what do you care for a myriad instances and applications? To a philosopher all *news*, as it is called, is gossip, and they who edit and read it are old women over their tea. Yet not a few are greedy after this gossip. There was such a rush, as I hear, the other day at one of the offices to learn the foreign news by the last arrival, that several large squares of plate glass belonging to the establishment

<sup>155</sup> The Ouachita River in Arkansas, then the frontier, where methods of fighting like "gouging" were reputedly common. See A. B. Longstreet's account of "The Fight" in his *Georgia Scenes* (1835).

<sup>156</sup> A double reference to Mammoth Cave in Kentucky and to the "dark unfathomed caves" in Gray's elegy.

<sup>157</sup> Introduced by Sir Rowland Hill in England in 1840.



were broken by the pressure,—news which I seriously think a ready wit might write a twelvemonth or twelve years beforehand with sufficient accuracy. As for Spain, for instance, if you know how to throw in Don Carlos and the Infanta, and Don Pedro and Seville and Granada,<sup>158</sup> from time to time in the right proportions,—they may have changed the names a little since I saw the papers,—and serve up a bull-fight when other entertainments fail, it will be true to the letter, and give us as good an idea of the exact state or ruin of things in Spain as the most succinct and lucid reports under this head in the newspapers: and as for England, almost the last significant scrap of news from that quarter was the revolution of 1649;<sup>159</sup> and if you have learned the history of her crops for an average year, you never need attend to that thing again, unless your speculations are of a merely pecuniary character. If one may judge who rarely looks into the newspapers, nothing new does ever happen in foreign parts, a French revolution not excepted.<sup>160</sup>

What news! how much more important to know what that is which was never old! "Kieou-he-yu (great dignitary of the state of Wei) sent a man to Khoung-tseu to know his news. Khoung-tseu caused the messenger to be seated near him, and questioned him in these terms: What is your master doing? The messenger answered with respect: My master desires to diminish the number of his faults, but he cannot come to the end of them. The messenger being gone,<sup>30</sup> the philosopher remarked: What a worthy messenger! What a worthy messenger!"<sup>161</sup> The preacher, instead of vexing the ears of drowsy farmers on their day of rest at the end of the week,—for Sunday is the fit conclusion of an ill-spent week, and not the fresh and brave beginning of a new one,—with this one other draggletail of a sermon, should shout with thundering voice,—"Pause! Avast! Why so seeming fast, but deadly slow?"

<sup>158</sup> The principal figures of the Civil War raging in Spain during the thirties and forties.

<sup>159</sup> The English Civil War in which Cromwell triumphed over Charles I.

<sup>160</sup> In the manuscript version Thoreau adds this note: "This was written before the last [1848] Revolution broke out; but a revolution in France might be expected any day; and it would be as easy to tell where it would end, before it was born, as after it was five years old." Emerson also frequently comments on the volatility of the French nation, generally with adverse comments upon the chaotic social and political situation in France.

<sup>161</sup> From the *Analects* of Confucius XIV, 26, 1-2.

Shams and delusions are esteemed for soundest truths, while reality is fabulous. If men would steadily observe realities only, and not allow themselves to be deluded, life, to compare it with such things as we know, would be like a fairy tale and the Arabian Nights' Entertainments. If we respected only what is inevitable and has a right to be, music and poetry would resound along the streets. When we are unhurried and wise, we perceive that only great and worthy things have any permanent and absolute existence,—that petty fears and petty pleasures are but the shadow of the reality. This is always exhilarating and sublime. By closing the eyes and slumbering, and consenting to be deceived by shows, men establish and confirm their daily life of routine and habit every where, which still is built on purely illusory foundations. Children, who play life, discern its true law and relations more clearly than men, who fail to live it worthily, but who think that they are wiser by experience, that is, by failure. I have read in a Hindoo book, that "there was a king's son, who, being expelled in infancy from his native city, was brought up by a forester, and, growing up to maturity in that state, imagined himself to belong to the barbarous race with which he lived. One of his father's ministers having discovered him, revealed to him what he was, and the misconception of his character was removed, and he knew himself to be a prince. So soul," continues the Hindoo philosopher, "from the circumstances in which it is placed, mistakes its own character, until the truth is revealed to it by some holy teacher, and then it knows itself to be *Brahme*."<sup>162</sup> I perceive that we inhabitants of New England live this mean life that we do because our vision does not penetrate the surface of things. We think that that *is* which *appears* to be. If a man should walk through this town and see only the reality, where, think you, would the "Mill-dam"<sup>163</sup> go to? If he should give us an account of the realities he beheld there, we should not recognize the place in his description. Look at a meeting-house, or a courthouse, or a jail, or a shop, or a dwelling-house, and say what that thing really is before a true gaze, and they would all go to pieces in your account of them. Men esteem truth remote, in the outskirts of the

<sup>162</sup> See Emerson's "Brahma."

<sup>163</sup> In the manuscript version Thoreau wrote "State Street," evidently referring to Boston.



system, behind the farthest star, before Adam and after the last man. In eternity there is indeed something true and sublime. But all these times and places and occasions are now and here. God himself culminates in the present movement, and will never be more divine in the lapse of all the ages. And we are enabled to apprehend at all what is sublime and noble only by the perpetual instilling and drenching of the reality that surrounds us. The universe constantly and obediently answers to our conceptions; 10 whether we travel fast or slow, the track is laid for us. Let us spend our lives in conceiving then. The poet or the artist never yet had so fair and noble a design but some of his posterity at least could accomplish it.

Let us spend one day as deliberately as Nature, and not be thrown off the track by every nutshell and mosquito's wing that falls on the rails. Let us rise early and fast, or break fast, gently and without perturbation; let company come and let company go, let 20 the bells ring and the children cry,—determined to make a day of it. Why should we knock under and go with the stream? Let us not be upset and overwhelmed in that terrible rapid and whirlpool called a dinner, situated in the meridian shallows. Weather this danger and you are safe, for the rest of the way is down hill. With unrelaxed nerves, with morning vigor, sail by it, looking another way, tied to the mast like Ulysses.<sup>164</sup> If the engine whistles, let it whistle till it is hoarse for its pains. If the bell rings, why 30 should we run? We will consider what kind of music they are like. Let us settle ourselves, and work and wedge our feet downward through the mud and slush of opinion, and prejudice, and tradition, and delusion, and appearance, that alluvion which covers the globe, through Paris and London, through New York and Boston and Concord, through church and state, through poetry and philosophy and religion, till we come to a hard bottom and rocks in place, which we can call *reality*, and say, This is, and no mistake; and 40 then begin, having a *point d'appui*,<sup>165</sup> below freshet and frost and fire, a place where you might found a wall or a state, or set a lamp-post safely, or perhaps a gauge, not a Nilometer,<sup>166</sup> but a Realometer, that future ages might know how deep a freshet of shams

and appearances had gathered from time to time. If you stand right fronting and face to face to a fact, you will see the sun glimmer on both its surfaces, as if it were a cimeter, and feel its sweet edge dividing you through the heart and marrow, and so you will happily conclude your mortal career. Be it life or death, we crave only reality. If we are really dying, let us hear the rattle in our throats and feel cold in the extremities; if we are alive, let us go about our business.

Time is but the stream I go a-fishing in. I drink at it; but while I drink I see the sandy bottom and detect how shallow it is. Its thin current slides away, but eternity remains. I would drink deeper; fish in the sky, whose bottom is pebbly with stars. I cannot count one. I know not the first letter of the alphabet. I have always been regretting that I was not as wise as the day I was born. The intellect is a cleaver; it discerns and rifts its way into the secret of things. I do not wish to be any more busy with my hands than is necessary. My head is hands and feet. I feel all my best faculties concentrated in it. My instinct tells me that my head is an organ for burrowing, as some creatures use their snout and fore-paws, and with it I would mine and burrow my way through these hills. I think that the richest vein is somewhere hereabouts; so by the divining rod and thin rising vapors I judge; and here I will begin to mine.

[*The Battle of the Ants*]

(FROM CHAPTER XII)

It is remarkable how many creatures live wild and free though secret in the woods, and still sustain themselves in the neighborhood of towns, suspected by hunters only. How retired the otter manages to live here! He grows to be four feet long, as big as a small boy, perhaps without any human being getting a glimpse of him. I formerly saw the raccoon in the woods behind where my house is built, and probably still heard their whinnering at night. Commonly I rested an hour or two in the shade at noon, after planning, and ate my lunch, and read a little by a spring which was the source of a swamp and of a brook, oozing from under Brister's Hill, half a mile from my field. The approach to this was through a succession of descending grassy hollows, full of young pitch-pines, into a larger wood about the swamp.

<sup>164</sup> As Ulysses was tied in defense against the seductive songs of the Sirens, *Odyssey*, bk. XII.

<sup>165</sup> A basis of operations.

<sup>166</sup> An instrument for determining the height of water in the Nile at flood tide.

There, in a very secluded and shaded spot, under a spreading white-pine, there was yet a clean firm sward to sit on. I had dug out the spring and made a well of clear gray water, where I could dip up a pailful without roiling it, and thither I went for this purpose almost every day in midsummer, when the pond was warmest. Thither too the woodcock led her brood, to probe the mud for worms, flying but a foot above them down the bank, while they ran in a troop beneath; but at last, spying me, she would leave her young and circle round and round me, nearer and nearer till within four or five feet, pretending broken wings and legs, to attract my attention, and get off her young, who would already have taken up their march, with faint wiry peep, single file through the swamp, as she directed. Or I heard the peep of the young when I could not see the parent bird. There too the turtle-doves sat over the spring, or fluttered from bough to bough of the soft white-pines over my head; or the red squirrel, coursing down the nearest bough, was particularly familiar and inquisitive. You only need sit still long enough in some attractive spot in the woods that all its inhabitants may exhibit themselves to you by turns.

I was witness to events of a less peaceful character. One day when I went out to my wood-pile, or rather my pile of stumps, I observed two large ants, the one red, the other much larger, nearly half an inch long, and black, fiercely contending with one another. Having once got hold they never let go, but struggled and wrestled and rolled on the chips incessantly. Looking farther, I was surprised to find that the chips were covered with such combatants, that it was not a *duellum*, but a *bellum*, a war between two races of ants, the red always pitted against the black, and frequently two red ones to one black. The legions of these Myrmidons covered all the hills and vales in my wood-yard, and the ground was already strewn with the dead and dying, both red and black. It was the only battle which I have ever witnessed, the only battle-field I ever trod while the battle was raging; internecine war; the red republicans on the one hand, and the black imperialists on the other. On every side they were engaged in deadly combat, yet without any noise that I could hear, and human soldiers never fought so resolutely. I watched a couple that were fast locked in each other's embraces, in a little sunny valley amid the chips, now at noon-day prepared to fight till the sun went down, or life went out. The

smaller red champion had fastened himself like a vice to his adversary's front, and through all the tumblings on that field never for an instant ceased to gnaw at one of his feelers near the root, having already caused the other to go by the board; while the stronger black one dashed him from side to side, and, as I saw on looking nearer, had already divested him of several of his members. They fought with more pertinacity than bulldogs. Neither manifested the least disposition to retreat. It was evident that their battle-cry was Conquer or die. In the mean while there came along a single red ant on the hill-side of this valley, evidently full of excitement, who either had despatched his foe, or had not yet taken part in the battle; probably the latter, for he had lost none of his limbs; whose mother had charged him to return with his shield or upon it. Or perchance he was some Achilles, who had nourished his wrath apart, and had now come to avenge or rescue his Patroclus. He saw this unequal combat from afar,—for the blacks were nearly twice the size of the red,—he drew near with rapid pace till he stood on his guard within half an inch of the combatants; then watching his opportunity, he sprang upon the black warrior, and commenced his operations near the root of his right foreleg, leaving the foe to select among his own members; and so there were three united for life, as if a new kind of attraction had been invented which put all other locks and cements to shame. I should not have wondered by this time to find that they had their respective musical bands stationed on some eminent chip, and playing their national airs the while, to excite the slow and cheer the dying combatants. I was myself excited somewhat even as if they had been men. The more you think of it, the less the difference. And certainly there is not the fight recorded in Concord history, at least, if in the history of America, that will bear a moment's comparison with this, whether for the numbers engaged in it, or for the patriotism and heroism displayed. For numbers and for carnage it was an Austerlitz<sup>167</sup> or Dresden.<sup>168</sup> Concord Fight! Two killed on the patriots' side, and Luther Blanchard<sup>169</sup> wounded! Why here

<sup>167</sup> The great battle fought just west of Austerlitz in Czechoslovakia in which Napoleon I defeated the Austrians and Russians on December 2, 1805.

<sup>168</sup> The Battle of Dresden, the last of Napoleon's great victories, was fought on August 26–27, 1813.

<sup>169</sup> Luther Blanchard, of Acton, Mass., one of the first to be wounded in the battle at Concord.

fire!"—and thousands shared the fate of Davis and every ant was a Buttrick,<sup>170</sup>—"Fire! for God's sake Hosmer."<sup>171</sup> There was not one hireling there. I have no doubt that it was a principle they fought for, as much as our ancestors, and not to avoid a three-penny tax on their tea; and the results of this battle will be as important and memorable to those whom it concerns as those of the battle of Bunker Hill, at least.

I took up the chip on which the three I have particularly described were struggling, carried it into my house, and placed it under a tumbler on my window-sill, in order to see the issue. Holding a microscope to the first-mentioned red ant, I saw that, though he was assiduously gnawing at the near fore-leg of his enemy, having severed his remaining feeler, his own breast was all torn away, exposing what vitals he had there to the jaws of the black warrior, whose breast-plate was apparently too thick for him to pierce; and the dark carbuncles of the sufferer's eyes shone with 20 ferocity such as war only could excite. They struggled half an hour longer under the tumbler, and when I looked again the black soldier had severed the heads of his foes from their bodies, and the still living heads were hanging on either side of him like ghastly trophies at his saddle-bow, still apparently as firmly fastened as ever, and he was endeavoring with feeble struggles, being without feelers and with only the remnant of a leg, and I know not how many other wounds, to divest himself of them: which at length, 30 after half an hour more, he accomplished. I raised the glass, and he went off over the window-sill in that crippled state. Whether he finally survived that combat, and spent the remainder of his days in some Hotel des Invalides, I do not know; but I thought that his industry would not be worth much thereafter. I never learned which party was victorious, nor the cause of the war; but I felt for the rest of that day as if I had had my feelings excited and harrowed by witnessing the struggle, the ferocity and carnage, 40 of a human battle before my door.

Kirby and Spence<sup>172</sup> tell us that the battles of ants have long been celebrated and the date of them

<sup>170</sup> Major John Buttrick, of Concord, led the patriots in the battle at Concord Bridge.

<sup>171</sup> Captain Isaac Davis and Abner Hosmer, both of Acton, were among the first on the patriot side to be killed.

<sup>172</sup> William Kirby (1759-1850) and William Spence (1783-1860), co-authors of a four-volume *Introduction to Entomology* (1815-26).

recorded, though they say that Huber<sup>173</sup> is the only modern author who appears to have witnessed them. "Æneas Sylvius,"<sup>174</sup> say they, "after giving a very circumstantial account of one contested with great obstinacy by a great and small species on the trunk of a pear tree," adds that "This action was fought in the pontificate of Eugenius the Fourth,<sup>175</sup> in the presence of Nicholas Pistoriensis, an eminent lawyer, who related the whole history of the battle with the greatest fidelity.' A similar engagement between great and small ants is recorded by Olaus Magnus,<sup>176</sup> in which the small ones, being victorious, are said to have buried the bodies of their own soldiers, but left those of their giant enemies a prey to the birds. This event happened previous to the expulsion of the tyrant Christiern the Second from Sweden."<sup>177</sup> The battle which I witnessed took place in the Presidency of Polk, five years before the passage of Webster's Fugitive-Slave Bill.

### Conclusion

#### (CHAPTER XVIII)

To the sick the doctors wisely recommend a change of air and scenery. Thank Heaven, here is not all the world. The buck-eye does not grow in New England, and the mocking-bird is rarely heard here. The wild-goose is more of a cosmopolite than we; he breaks his fast in Canada, takes a luncheon in the Ohio, and plumes himself for the night in a southern bayou. Even the bison, to some extent, keeps pace with the seasons, cropping the pastures of the Colorado only till a greener and sweeter grass awaits him by the Yellowstone. Yet we think that if rail-fences are pulled down, and stone-walls piled up on our farms, bounds are henceforth set to our lives and our fates decided. If you are chosen town-clerk, forsooth, you cannot go to Tierra del Fuego this summer; but you

<sup>173</sup> François Huber (1750-1831), author of *Nouvelles Observations sur les abeilles* (1792). Huber, though blind, wrote this work on bees, which laid the foundations for later investigations.

<sup>174</sup> Pope Pius II, better known as Æneas Sylvius, was pontiff from 1458 to 1464.

<sup>175</sup> Eugenius IV (1383-1447) was pope from 1431 to his death.

<sup>176</sup> Olaus Magnus (1490-1558), archbishop of Upsala and an authority on Swedish history.

<sup>177</sup> That is, 1523. Christian II was then ruler also of Denmark and Norway.

may go to the land of infernal fire nevertheless. The universe is wider than our views of it.

Yet we should oftener look over the taffarel of our craft, like curious passengers, and not make the voyage like stupid sailors picking oakum. The other side of the globe is but the home of our correspondent. Our voyaging is only great-circle sailing, and the doctors prescribe for diseases of the skin merely. One hastens to Southern Africa to chase the giraffe; but surely that is not the game he would be after. How long, pray, would a man hunt giraffes if he could? Snipes and woodcocks also may afford rare sport; but I trust it would be nobler game to shoot one's self.—

Direct your eye right inward, and you'll find  
A thousand regions in your mind  
Yet undiscovered. Travel them, and be  
Expert in home-cosmography.

What does Africa,—what does the West stand for? Is not our own interior white on the chart? black though it may prove, like the coast, when discovered. Is it the source of the Nile, or the Niger, or the Mississippi, or a North-West Passage around this continent, that we would find? Are these the problems which most concern mankind? Is Franklin the only man who is lost, that his wife should be so earnest to find him? Does Mr. Grinnell know where he himself is? Be rather the Mungo Park, the Lewis and Clarke and Frobisher, of your own streams and oceans; explore your own higher latitudes,—with shiploads of preserved meats to support you, if they be necessary; and pile the empty cans sky-high for a sign. Were preserved meats invented to preserve meat merely? Nay, be a Columbus to whole new continents and worlds within you, opening new channels, not of trade, but of thought. Every man is the lord of a realm beside which the earthly empire of the Czar is but a petty state, a hummock left by the ice. Yet some can be patriotic who have no self-respect, and sacrifice the greater to

the less. They love the soil which makes their graves, but have no sympathy with the spirit which may still animate their clay. Patriotism is a maggot in their heads. What was the meaning of that South-Sea Exploring Expedition,<sup>183</sup> with all its parade and expense, but an indirect recognition of the fact, that there are continents and seas in the moral world, to which every man is an isthmus or an inlet, yet unexplored by him, but that it is easier to sail many thousand miles through cold and storm and cannibals, in a government ship, with five hundred men and boys to assist one, than it is to explore the private sea, the Atlantic and Pacific Ocean of one's being alone.—

Erret, et extremos alter scrutetur Iberos.  
Plus habet hic vitæ, plus habet ille viæ.<sup>184</sup>

Let them wander and scrutinize the outlandish Australians.  
I have more of God, they more of the road.

It is not worth the while to go round the world to count the cats in Zanzibar.<sup>185</sup> Yet do this even till you can do better, and you may perhaps find some "Symmes' Hole"<sup>186</sup> by which to get at the inside at last. England and France, Spain and Portugal, Gold Coast and Slave Coast, all front on this private sea; but no bark from them has ventured out of sight of land, though it is without doubt the direct way to India. If you would learn to speak all tongues and conform to the customs of all nations, if you would travel farther than all travellers, be naturalized in all climes, and cause the Sphinx to dash her head against a stone,<sup>187</sup> even obey the precept of the old philosopher, and Explore thyself. Herein are demanded the eye and the nerve. Only the defeated and deserters go to the wars, cowards that run away and enlist. Start now on that farthest western way, which does not pause at the Mississippi or the Pacific, nor conduct toward a worn-out China or Japan, but leads on direct a tangent to this sphere, summer and winter, day and night, sun down, moon down, and at last earth down too.

It is said that Mirabeau took to highway robbery

<sup>178</sup> Sir John Franklin (1786–1847), an Arctic explorer who was lost on his last expedition, in 1845, in search of the Northwest Passage.

<sup>179</sup> Henry Grinnell (1799–1874), an American merchant, financed two of the numerous expeditions sent in search of Franklin.

<sup>180</sup> Mungo Park (1771–1806), explorer of the Niger and much of western Africa.

<sup>181</sup> Expedition by Meriwether Lewis (1774–1809) and George Rogers Clark (1752–1818) to explore the Pacific Northwest undertaken in 1804.

<sup>182</sup> Sir Martin Frobisher (1535?–94), English navigator.

<sup>183</sup> An expedition undertaken by the U. S. Navy in 1838–42 to investigate the South Pacific Antarctic region.

<sup>184</sup> The last lines in Claudian's *De Sene Veronensi*.

<sup>185</sup> In East Africa, often used as symbolic of remoteness.

<sup>186</sup> A reference to the theory of Captain John Cleves Symmes expounded in his *Theory of Concentric Spheres* (1826), namely, that the earth is hollow and open at the poles.

<sup>187</sup> When Ædipus guessed the riddle, the Sphinx punished herself as she had previously punished those who had failed to guess her riddle.

"to ascertain what degree of resolution was necessary in order to place one's self in formal opposition to the most sacred laws of society." He declared that "a soldier who fights in the ranks does not require half so much courage as a foot-pad,"—"that honor and religion have never stood in the way of a well-considered and a firm resolve." This was manly, as the world goes; and yet it was idle, if not desperate. A saner man would have found himself often enough "in formal opposition" to what are deemed "the most sacred laws of society," through obedience to yet more sacred laws, and so have tested his resolution without going out of his way. It is not for a man to put himself in such an attitude to society, but to maintain himself in whatever attitude he find himself through obedience to the laws of his being, which will never be one of opposition to a just government, if he should chance to meet with such.<sup>188</sup>

I left the woods for as good a reason as I went there. Perhaps it seemed to me that I had several more lives to live, and could not spare any more time for that one. It is remarkable how easily and insensibly we fall into a particular route, and make a beaten track for ourselves. I had not lived there a week before my feet wore a path from my door to the pond-side, and though it is five or six years since I trod it, it is still quite distinct.<sup>189</sup> It is true, I fear that others may have fallen into it, and so helped to keep it open. The surface of the earth is soft and impressible by the feet of men; and so with the paths which the mind travels. How worn and dusty, then, must be the highways of the world, how deep the ruts of tradition and conformity! I did not wish to take a cabin passage, but rather to go before the mast and on the deck of the world, for there I could best see the moonlight amid the mountains. I do not wish to go below now.

I learned this, at least, by my experiment; that if one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams, and endeavors to live the life which he has imagined, he will meet with a success unexpected in common hours. He will put some things behind, will pass an invisible boundary; new, universal, and more liberal laws will begin to establish themselves around

and within him;<sup>190</sup> or the old laws be expanded, and interpreted in his favor in a more liberal sense, and he will live with the license of a higher order of beings. In proportion as he simplifies his life, the laws of the universe will appear less complex, and solitude will not be solitude, nor poverty poverty, nor weakness weakness. If you have built castles in the air, your work need not be lost; that is where they should be. Now put the foundations under them.

It is a ridiculous demand which England and America make, that you shall speak so that they can understand you. Neither men nor toad-stools grow so. As if that were important, and there were not enough to understand you without them. As if Nature could support but one order of understandings, could not sustain birds as well as quadrupeds, flying as well as creeping things, and *hush* and *who*, which Bright can understand, were the best English. As if there were safety in stupidity alone. I fear chiefly lest my expression may not be *extravagant* enough, may not wander far enough beyond the narrow limits of my daily experience, so as to be adequate to the truth of which I have been convinced. *Extravagance!* it depends on how you are yarded. The migrating buffalo, which seeks new pastures in another latitude, is not extravagant like the cow which kicks over the pail, leaps the cow-yard fence, and runs after her calf, in milking time. I desire to speak somewhere *without* bounds; like a man in a waking moment, to men in their waking moments; for I am convinced that I cannot exaggerate enough even to lay the foundation of a true expression. Who that has heard a strain of music feared then lest he should speak extravagantly any more forever? In view of the future or possible, we should live quite laxly and undefined in front, our outlines dim and misty on that side; as our shadows reveal an insensible perspiration toward the sun. The volatile truth of our words should continually betray the inadequacy of the residual statement. Their truth is instantly *translated*; its literal monument alone remains. The words which express our faith and piety are not definite; yet they are significant and fragrant like frankincense to superior natures.

Why level downward to our dullest perception

<sup>188</sup> The passage indicates that Thoreau desired to support a democratic government whenever possible.

<sup>189</sup> The cabin itself, however, was moved even before *Walden* was published, to a location several miles north. Here it served as a granary and eventually fell apart.

<sup>190</sup> In the manuscript Thoreau inserted the Wordsworthian line, "Heaven lay about him in his manhood even."

always, and praise that as common sense? The commonest sense is the sense of men asleep, which they express by snoring. Sometimes we are inclined to class those who are once-and-a-half witted with the half-witted, because we appreciate only a third part of their wit. Some would find fault with the morning-red, if they ever get up early enough. "They pretend," as I hear, "that the verses of Kabir<sup>191</sup> have four different senses; illusion, spirit, intellect, and the exoteric doctrine of the Vedas;" but in this part of 10 the world it is considered a ground for complaint if a man's writings admit of more than one interpretation. While England endeavors to cure the potato-rot, will not any endeavor to cure the brain-rot, which prevails so much more widely and fatally?

I do not suppose that I have attained to obscurity, but I should be proud if no more fatal fault were found with my pages on this score than was found with the Walden ice. Southern customers objected to its blue color, which is the evidence of its purity, as 20 if it were muddy, and preferred the Cambridge ice, which is white, but tastes of weeds. The purity men love is like the mists which envelop the earth, and not like the azure ether beyond.

Some are dinning in our ears that we Americans, and moderns generally, are intellectual dwarfs compared with the ancients, or even the Elizabethan men. But what is that to the purpose? A living dog is better than a dead lion. Shall a man go and hang himself because he belongs to the race of pygmies, 30 and not be the biggest pygmy that he can? Let every one mind his own business, and endeavor to be what he was made.

Why should we be in such desperate haste to succeed, and in such desperate enterprises? If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer. Let him step to the music which he hears, however measured or far away. It is not important that he should mature as soon as an apple-tree or an oak. Shall he turn his 40 spring into summer? If the condition of things which we were made for is not yet, what were any reality which we can substitute? We will not be shipwrecked on a vain reality. Shall we with pains erect a heaven of blue glass over ourselves, though

when it is done we shall be sure to gaze still at the true ethereal heaven far above, as if the former were not?

There was an artist in the city of Kouroo<sup>192</sup> who was disposed to strive after perfection. One day it came into his mind to make a staff. Having considered that in an imperfect work time is an ingredient, but into a perfect work time does not enter, he said to himself, It shall be perfect in all respects, though I should do nothing else in my life. He proceeded instantly to the forest for wood, being resolved that it should not be made of unsuitable material; and as he searched for and rejected stick after stick his friends gradually deserted him, for they grew old in their works and died, but he grew not older by a moment. His singleness of purpose and resolution, and his elevated piety, endowed him, without his knowledge, with perennial youth. As he made no compromise with Time, Time kept out of his way, and only sighed at a distance because he could not overcome him. Before he had found a stock in all respects suitable the city of Kouroo was a hoary ruin, and he sat on one of its mounds to peel the stick. Before he had given it the proper shape the dynasty of the Candahars was at an end, and with the point of the stick he wrote the name of the last of that race in the sand, and then resumed his work. By the time he had smoothed and polished the staff Kalpa was no longer the pole-star; and ere he had put on the ferule and the head adorned with precious stones, Brahma had awoke and slumbered many times. But why do I stay to mention these things? When the finishing stroke was put to his work, it suddenly expanded before the eyes of the astonished artist into the fairest of all the creations of Brahma. He had made a new system in making a staff, a world with full and fair proportions; in which, though the old cities and dynasties had passed away, fairer and more glorious ones had taken their places. And now he 40 saw by the heap of shavings still fresh at his feet, that, for him and his work, the former lapse of time had been an illusion, and that no more time had elapsed than is required for a single scintillation from the brain of Brahma to fall on and inflame the tinder of a mortal brain. The material was pure, and his art was pure; how could the result be other than wonderful?

<sup>191</sup> Kabir was a Hindu and Moslem saint of the fifteenth century and an opponent of idolatry, whose peace-loving followers worshipped Rama.

<sup>192</sup> City in French Congo, West Africa.

No face which we can give to a matter will stead us so well at last as the truth. This alone wears well. For the most part, we are not where we are, but in a false position. Through an infirmity of our natures, we suppose a case, and put ourselves into it, and hence are in two cases at the same time, and it is doubly difficult to get out. In sane moments we regard only the facts, the case that is. Say what you have to say, not what you ought. Any truth is better than make-believe. Tom Hyde, the tinker, standing <sup>10</sup> on the gallows, was asked if he had any thing to say. "Tell the tailors," said he, "to remember to make a knot in their thread before they take the first stitch." His companion's prayer is forgotten.

However mean your life is, meet it and live it; do not shun it and call it hard names. It is not so bad as you are. It looks poorest when you are richest. The fault-finder will find faults even in paradise. Love your life, poor as it is. You may perhaps have some pleasant, thrilling, glorious hours, even in a poor-<sup>20</sup>house. The setting sun is reflected from the windows of the alms-house as brightly as from the rich man's abode; the snow melts before its door as early in the spring. I do not see but a quiet mind may live as contentedly there, and have as cheering thoughts, as in a palace. The town's poor <sup>193</sup> seem to me often to live the most independent lives of any. May be they are simply great enough to receive without misgiving. Most think that they are above being supported by the town; but it oftener happens that they <sup>30</sup> are not above supporting themselves by dishonest means, which should be more disreputable. Cultivate poverty like a garden herb, like sage. Do not trouble yourself much to get new things, whether clothes or friends. Turn the old; return to them. Things do not change; we change. Sell your clothes and keep your thoughts. God will see that you do not want society. If I were confined to a corner of a garret all my days, like a spider, the world would be just as large to me while I had my thoughts about me. The philosopher <sup>40</sup> said: "From an army of three divisions one can take away its general, and put it in disorder; from the man the most abject and vulgar one cannot take away his thought." Do not seek so anxiously to be developed, to subject yourself to many influences to be played on; it is all dissipation. Humility like darkness reveals the heavenly lights. The shadows of poverty

and meanness gather around us, "and lo! creation widens to our view." <sup>194</sup> We are often reminded that if there were bestowed on us the wealth of Croesus, our aims must still be the same, and our means essentially the same. Moreover, if you are restricted in your range by poverty, if you cannot buy books and newspapers, for instance, you are but confined to the most significant and vital experiences; you are compelled to deal with the material which yields the most sugar and the most starch. It is life near the bone where it is sweetest. You are defended from being a trifle. No man loses ever on a lower level by magnanimity on a higher. Superfluous wealth can buy superfluities only. Money is not required to buy one necessary of the soul.

I live in the angle of a leaden wall, into whose composition was poured a little alloy of bell metal. Often, in the repose of my mid-day, there reaches my ears a confused *tintinnabulum* <sup>195</sup> from without. It is the noise of my contemporaries. My neighbors tell me of their adventures with famous gentlemen and ladies, what notabilities they met at the dinner-table; but I am no more interested in such things than in the contents of the Daily Times. The interest and the conversation are about costume and manners chiefly; but a goose is a goose still, dress it as you will. They tell me of California and Texas, of England and the Indies, of the Hon. Mr. — of Georgia or of Massachusetts, all transient and fleeting phenomena, till I am ready to leap from their court-yard like the Mameluke bey. I delight to come to my bearings,—not walk in procession with pomp and parade, in a conspicuous place, but to walk even with the Builder of the universe, if I may,—not to live in this restless, nervous, bustling, trivial Nineteenth Century, but stand or sit thoughtfully while it goes by. What are men celebrating? They are all on a committee of arrangements, and hourly expect a speech from somebody. God is only the president of the day, and Webster is his orator. I love to weigh, to settle, to gravitate toward that which most strongly and rightfully attracts me;—not hang by the beam of the scale and try to weigh less,—not suppose a case, but take the case that is; to travel the only path I can, and that on which no power can resist me. It affords me no satisfaction to commence to spring an arch before I have got a solid

<sup>193</sup> Thoreau passed the Concord poor farm every time he walked the road from Walden to Concord.

<sup>194</sup> Lines 7–8 of Blanco White's sonnet, "To Night."

<sup>195</sup> A tinkling or jingling of bells.



foundation. Let us not play at kittlybenders.<sup>196</sup> There is a solid bottom every where. We read that the traveller asked the boy if the swamp before him had a hard bottom. The boy replied that it had. But presently the traveller's horse sank in up to the girths, and he observed to the boy, "I thought you said that this bog had a hard bottom." "So it has," answered the latter, "but you have not got half way to it yet." So it is with the bogs and quicksands of society; but he is an old boy that knows it. Only what is thought, 10 said or done at a certain rare coincidence is good. I would not be one of those who will foolishly drive a nail into mere lath and plastering; such a deed would keep me awake nights. Give me a hammer, and let me feel for the furrowing. Do not depend on the putty. Drive a nail home and clinch it so faithfully that you can wake up in the night and think of your work with satisfaction,—a work at which you would not be ashamed to invoke the Muse. So will help you God, and so only. Every nail driven should be 20 as another rivet in the machine of the universe, you carrying on the work.

Rather than love, than money, than fame, give me truth. I sat at a table where were rich food and wine in abundance, and obsequious attendance, but sincerity and truth were not; and I went away hungry from the inhospitable board. The hospitality was as cold as the ices. I thought that there was no need of ice to freeze them. They talked to me of the age of the wine and the fame of the vintage; but I 30 thought of an older, a newer and purer wine, of a more glorious vintage, which they had not got, and could not buy. The style, the house and grounds and "entertainment" pass for nothing with me. I called on the king, but he made me wait in his hall, and conducted like a man incapacitated for hospitality. There was a man in my neighborhood who lived in a hollow tree. His manners were truly regal. I should have done better had I called on him.

How long shall I sit in our porticoes practising 40 idle and musty virtues, which any work would make impertinent? As if one were to begin the day with long-suffering, and hire a man to hoe his potatoes; and in the afternoon go forth to practise Christian meekness and charity with goodness aforethought! Consider the China pride and stagnant self-complacency of mankind. This generation reclines a little to congratulate itself on being the last of an illustrious

<sup>196</sup> A form of skating on thin ice.

line; and in Boston and London and Paris and Rome, thinking of its long descent, it speaks of its progress in art and science and literature with satisfaction. There are the Records of the Philosophical Societies, and the public Eulogies of *Great Men*! It is the good Adam contemplating his own virtue. "Yes, we have done great deeds, and sung divine songs, which shall never die,"—that is, as long as we can remember them. The learned societies and great men of Assyria, —where are they? What youthful philosophers and experimentalists we are! There is not one of my readers who has yet lived a whole human life. These may be but the spring months in the life of the race. If we have had the seven-years' itch, we have not seen the seventeen-year locust yet in Concord. We are acquainted with a mere pellicle of the globe on which we live. Most have not delved six feet beneath the surface, nor leaped as many above it. We know not where we are. Beside, we are sound asleep nearly half our time. Yet we esteem ourselves wise, and have an established order on the surface. Truly, we are deep thinkers, we are ambitious spirits! As I stand over the insect crawling amid the pine needles on the forest floor, and endeavoring to conceal itself from my sight, and ask myself why it will cherish those humble thoughts, and hide its head from me who might, perhaps, be its benefactor, and impart to its race some cheering information, I am reminded of the greater Benefactor and Intelligence that stands 50 over me the human insect.

There is an incessant influx of novelty into the world, and yet we tolerate incredible dulness. I need only suggest what kind of sermons are still listened to in the most enlightened countries. There are such words as joy and sorrow, but they are only the burden of a psalm, sung with a nasal twang, while we believe in the ordinary and mean. We think that we can change our clothes only. It is said that the British Empire is very large and respectable, and that the United States are a first-rate power. We do not believe that a tide rises and falls behind every man which can float the British Empire like a chip, if he should ever harbor it in his mind. Who knows what sort of seventeen-year locust will next come out of the ground? The government of the world I live in was not framed, like that of Britain, in after-dinner conversations over the wine.

The life in us is like the water in the river. It may rise this year higher than man has ever known it,



and flood the parched uplands; even this may be the eventful year, which will drown out all our muskrats. It was not always dry land where we dwell. I see far inland the banks which the stream anciently washed, before science began to record its freshets. Every one has heard the story which has gone the rounds of New England, of a strong and beautiful bug which came out of the dry leaf of an old table of apple-tree wood, which had stood in a farmer's kitchen for sixty years, first in Connecticut, and afterward in Massachusetts,—from an egg deposited in the living tree many years earlier still, as appeared by counting the annual layers beyond it; which was heard gnawing out for several weeks, hatched perchance by the heat of an urn. Who does not feel his faith in a resurrection and immortality strengthened by hearing of this? Who knows what beautiful and winged life, whose

egg has been buried for ages under many concentric layers of woodenness in the dead dry life of society, deposited at first in the alburnum of the green and living tree, which has been gradually converted into the semblance of its well-seasoned tomb,—heard perchance gnawing out now for years by the astonished family of man, as they sat round the festive board,—may unexpectedly come forth from amidst society's most trivial and handselled furniture, to enjoy its perfect summer life at last!

I do not say that John or Jonathan will realize all this; but such is the character of that morrow which mere lapse of time can never make to dawn. The light which puts out our eyes is darkness to us. Only that day dawns to which we are awake. There is more day to dawn. The sun is but a morning star.

### Walking<sup>197</sup>

I wish to speak a word for Nature, for absolute freedom and wildness, as contrasted with a freedom and culture merely civil,—to regard man as an inhabitant, or a part and parcel of Nature, rather than a member of society. I wish to make an extreme statement, if so I may make an emphatic one, for there are enough champions of civilisation: the minister, and the school-committee, and every one of you will take care of that.

I have met with but one or two persons in the course of my life who understand the art of Walking, that is, of taking walks,—who had a genius, so to speak, for *sauntering*: which word is beautifully derived “from idle people who roved about the country, in the Middle Ages, and asked charity, under pretence of going *à la Sainte Terre*,” to the Holy Land, till the children exclaimed, “There goes a *Sainte-Terre*,” a Saunterer,—a Holy-Lander. They who never go to the Holy Land in their walks, as they pretend, are indeed mere idlers and vagabonds; but they who do go there are saunterers in the good sense, such as I mean. Some, however, would derive

the words from *sans terre*, without land or a home, which, therefore, in the good sense, will mean, having no particular home, but equally at home everywhere. For this is the secret of successful sauntering. He who sits still in a house all the time may be the greatest vagrant of all; but the saunterer, in the good sense, is no more vagrant than the meandering river, which is all the while sedulously seeking the shortest course to the sea. But I prefer the first, which, indeed, is the most probable derivation. For every walk is a sort of crusade, preached by some Peter the Hermit<sup>198</sup> in us, to go forth and reconquer this Holy Land from the hands of the Infidels.

It is true, we are but faint-hearted crusaders, even the walkers, nowadays, who undertake no persevering, never-ending enterprises. Our expeditions are but tours, and come round again at evening to the old hearth-side from which we set out. Half the walk is but retracing our steps. We should go forth on the shortest walk, perchance, in the spirit of undying adventure, never to return,—prepared to send back our embalmed hearts only as relics to our desolate kingdoms. If you are ready to leave father and mother, and brother and sister, and wife and child and friends, and never see them again,—if you have paid your debts, and made your will, and settled all

<sup>197</sup> Sections of this essay appear in Thoreau's journal for the years 1850–52. It was prepared for publication by Thoreau shortly before his death, and was first published in the *Atlantic Monthly* for June, 1862 (IX, 657), the text of which is here followed.

<sup>198</sup> Peter the Hermit (d. 1115), preacher of the First Crusade.

your affairs, and are a free man, then you are ready for a walk. . . .

We have felt that we almost alone hereabouts practised this noble art; though, to tell the truth, at least if their own assertions are to be received, most of my townsmen would fain walk sometimes, as I do, but they cannot. No wealth can buy the requisite leisure, freedom, and independence, which are the capital in this profession. It comes only by the grace of God. It requires a direct dispensation from Heaven <sup>10</sup> to become a walker. You must be born into the family of the Walkers. . . .

I think that I cannot preserve my health and spirits, unless I spend four hours a day at least—and it is commonly more than that—sauntering through the woods and over the hills and fields, absolutely free from all worldly engagements. You may safely say. A penny for your thoughts, or a thousand pounds. When sometimes I am reminded that the mechanics and shopkeepers stay in their shops not only all the forenoon, but all the afternoon too, sitting with crossed legs, so many of them,—as if the legs were made to sit upon, and not to stand or walk upon,—I think that they deserve some credit for not having all committed suicide long ago. <sup>20</sup>

I, who cannot stay in my chamber for a single day without acquiring some rust, and when sometimes I have stolen forth for a walk at the eleventh hour of four o'clock in the afternoon, too late to redeem the day, when the shades of night were already begin- <sup>30</sup> ning to be mingled with the daylight, have felt as if I had committed some sin to be atoned for,—I confess that I am astonished at the power of endurance, to say nothing of the moral insensibility, of my neighbors who confine themselves to shops and offices the whole day for weeks and months, ay, and years almost together. I know not what manner of stuff they are of,—sitting there now at three o'clock in the afternoon, as if it were three o'clock in the morning. Bonaparte may talk of the three-o'clock-in-the- <sup>40</sup> morning courage, but it is nothing to the courage which can sit down cheerfully at this hour in the afternoon over against one's self whom you have known all the morning, to starve out a garrison to whom you are bound by such strong ties of sympathy. I wonder that about this time, or say between four and five o'clock in the afternoon, too late for the morning papers and too early for the evening ones,

there is not a general explosion heard up and down the street, scattering a legion of antiquated and house-bred notions and whims to the four winds for an airing,—and so the evil cure itself.

How womankind, who are confined to the house still more than men, stand it I do not know; but I have ground to suspect that most of them do not *stand* it at all. When, early in a summer afternoon, we have been shaking the dust of the village from the skirts of our garments, making haste past those houses with purely Doric or Gothic fronts, which have such an air of repose about them, my companion whispers that probably about these times their occupants are all gone to bed. Then it is that I appreciate the beauty and the glory of architecture, which itself never turns in, but forever stands out and erect, keeping watch over the slumberers.

No doubt temperament, and, above all, age have a good deal to do with it. As a man grows older, his ability to sit still and follow indoor occupations increases. He grows vespertinal <sup>199</sup> in his habits as the evening of life approaches, till at last he comes forth only just before sundown, and gets all the walk that he requires in half-an-hour.

But the walking of which I speak has nothing in it akin to taking exercise, as it is called, as the sick take medicine at stated hours,—as the swinging of dumb-bells or chairs; but is itself the enterprise and adventure of the day. If you would get exercise, go in search of the springs of life. Think of a man's swinging dumb-bells for his health, when those springs are bubbling up in far-off pastures unsought by him!

Moreover, you must walk like a camel, which is said to be the only beast which ruminates when walking. When a traveller asked Wordsworth's servant to show him her master's study, she answered, "Here is his library, but his study is out of doors."

Living much out of doors, in the sun and wind, will no doubt produce a certain roughness of character,—will cause a thicker cuticle to grow over some of the finer qualities of our nature, as on the face and hands, or as severe manual labor robs the hands of some of their delicacy of touch. So staying in the house, on the other hand, may produce a softness and smoothness, not to say thinness of skin, accompanied by an increased sensibility to certain impres-

<sup>199</sup> Of or pertaining to the evening.

sions. Perhaps we should be more susceptible to some influences important to our intellectual and moral growth, if the sun had shone and the wind blown on us a little less; and no doubt it is a nice matter to proportion rightly the thick and thin skin. But methinks that is a scurf that will fall off fast enough,—that the natural remedy is to be found in the proportion which the night bears to the day, the winter to the summer, thought to experience. There will be so much the more air and sunshine in our thoughts. 10 The callous palms of the labourer are conversant with finer tissues of self-respect and heroism, whose touch thrills the heart, than the languid fingers of idleness. That is mere sentimentality that lies abed by day and thinks itself white, far from the tan and callus of experience.

When we walk, we naturally go to the fields and woods: what would become of us, if we walked only in a garden or a mall? Even some sects of philosophers have felt the necessity of importing the woods 20 to themselves, since they did not go to the woods. "They planted groves and walks of Platanes," where they took *subdiales ambulationes* <sup>200</sup> in porticos open to the air. Of course it is of no use to direct our steps to the woods, if they do not carry us thither. I am alarmed when it happens that I have walked a mile into the woods bodily, without getting there in spirit. In my afternoon walk I would fain forget all my morning occupations and my obligations to society. But it sometimes happens that I cannot easily shake 30 off the village. The thought of some work will run in my head, and I am not where my body is,—I am out of my senses. In my walks I would fain return to my senses. What business have I in the woods, if I am thinking of something out of the woods? I suspect myself, and cannot help a shudder, when I find myself so implicated even in what are called good works,—for this may sometimes happen.

My vicinity affords many good walks; and though for so many years I have walked almost every day, 40 and sometimes for several days together, I have not yet exhausted them. An absolutely new prospect is a great happiness, and I can still get this any afternoon. Two or three hours' walking will carry me to as strange a country as I expect ever to see. A single farmhouse which I had not seen before is sometimes as good as the dominions of the King of Dahomey.<sup>201</sup>

There is in fact a sort of harmony discoverable between the capabilities of the landscape within a circle of ten miles' radius, or the limits of an afternoon walk, and the threescore years and ten of human life. It will never become quite familiar to you.

Nowadays almost all man's improvements, so called, as the building of houses, and the cutting down of the forest and of all large trees, simply deform the landscape, and make it more and more tame and cheap. A people who would begin by burning the fences and let the forest stand! I saw the fences half consumed, their ends lost in the middle of the prairie, and some worldly miser with a surveyor looking after his bounds, while heaven had taken place around him, and he did not see the angels going to and fro, but was looking for an old post-hole in the midst of paradise. I looked again, and saw him standing in the middle of a boggy, stygian fen, surrounded by devils, and he had found his bounds without a doubt, three little stones, where a stake had been driven, and looking nearer, I saw that the Prince of Darkness was his surveyor.

I can easily walk ten, fifteen, twenty, any number of miles, commencing at my own door, without going by any house, without crossing a road except where the fox and the mink do: first along by the river, and then the brook, and then the meadow and the wood-side. There are square miles in my vicinity which have no inhabitant. From many a hill I can see civilisation and the abodes of man afar. The farmers and their works are scarcely more obvious than woodchucks and their burrows. Man and his affairs, church and state and school, trade and commerce, and manufactures and agriculture, even politics, the most alarming of them all,—I am pleased to see how little space they occupy in the landscape. Politics is but a narrow field, and that still narrower highway yonder leads to it. I sometimes direct the traveller thither. If you would go to the political 50 world, follow the great road,—follow that market-man, keep his dust in your eyes, and it will lead you straight to it; for it, too, has its place merely, and does not occupy all space. I pass from it as from a bean-field into the forest, and it is forgotten. In one half-hour I can walk off to some portion of the earth's surface where a man does not stand from one year's end to another, and there, consequently, politics are not, for they are but as the cigar-smoke of a man. . . .

<sup>200</sup> Outdoor walks, i.e., in the open air.

<sup>201</sup> A French West-African colony.

What it is that makes it so hard sometimes to determine whither we will walk? I believe that there is a subtle magnetism in Nature, which, if we unconsciously yield to it, will direct us aright. It is not indifferent to us which way we walk. There is a right way; but we are very liable from heedlessness and stupidity to take the wrong one. We would fain take that walk, never yet taken by us through this actual world, which is perfectly symbolical of the path which we love to travel in the interior and ideal world; and sometimes, no doubt, we find it difficult to choose our direction, because it does not yet exist distinctly in our idea.

When I go out of the house for a walk, uncertain as yet whither I will bend my steps, and submit myself to my instinct to decide for me, I find, strange and whimsical as it may seem, that I finally and inevitably settle southwest, toward some particular wood or meadow or deserted pasture or hill in that direction. My needle is slow to settle,—varies a few degrees, and does not always point due southwest, it is true, and it has good authority for this variation, but it always settles between west and south-southwest. The future lies that way to me, and the earth seems more unexhausted and richer on that side. The outline which would bound my walks would be, not a circle, but a parabola, or rather like one of those cometary orbits which have been thought to be non-returning curves, in this case opening westward, in which my house occupies the place of the sun. I turn round and round irresolute sometimes for a quarter of an hour, until I decide, for the thousandth time, that I will walk into the southwest or west. Eastward I go only by force; but westward I go free. Thither no business leads me. It is hard for me to believe that I shall find fair landscapes or sufficient wildness and freedom behind the eastern horizon. I am not excited by the prospect of a walk thither; but I believe that the forest which I see in the western horizon stretches uninterruptedly toward the setting sun, and there are no towns nor cities in it of enough consequence to disturb me. Let me live where I will, on this side is the city, on that the wilderness, and ever I am leaving the city more and more, and withdrawing into the wilderness. I should not lay so much stress on this fact, if I did not believe that something like this is the prevailing tendency of my countrymen. I must walk toward Oregon, and not toward Europe. And that way the nation is moving, and I may say that

mankind progress from east to west. Within a few years we have witnessed the phenomenon of a south-eastward migration, in the settlement of Australia. but this affects us as a retrograde movement, and, judging from the moral and physical character of the first generation of Australians, has not yet proved a successful experiment. The eastern Tartars think that there is nothing west beyond Thibet. "The world ends there," say they; "beyond there is nothing but a shoreless sea." It is unmitigated East where they live.

We go eastward to realise history and study the works of art and literature, retracing the steps of the race; we go westward as into the future, with a spirit of enterprise and adventure. The Atlantic is a Lethean stream,<sup>202</sup> in our passage over which we have had an opportunity to forget the Old World and its institutions. If we do not succeed this time, there is perhaps one more chance for the race left before it arrives on the banks of the Styx; and that is in the Lethe of the Pacific, which is three times as wide.

I know not how significant it is, or how far it is an evidence of singularity, that an individual should thus consent in his pettiest walk with the general movement of the race; but I know that something akin to the migratory instinct in birds and quadrupeds,—which, in some instances, is known to have affected the squirrel tribe, impelling them to a general and mysterious movement, in which they were seen, say some, crossing the broadest rivers, each on its particular chip, with its tail raised for a sail, and bridging narrower streams with their dead,—that something like the *furor* which affects the domestic cattle in the spring, and which is referred to a worm in their tails,—affects both nations and individuals, either perennially or from time to time. Not a flock of wild geese cackles over our town, but it to some extent unsettles the value of real estate here, and, if I were a broker, I should probably take that disturbance into account.

Than longen folk to gon on pilgrimages,  
And palmeres for to seken strange strondes.<sup>203</sup>

Every sunset which I witness inspires me with the desire to go to a West as distant and as fair as that

<sup>202</sup> Reminiscent of Cotton Mather's passage in his "Life of John Eliot," in the *Magnalia*: "The Atlantick Ocean, like a River of Lethe, may easily cause us to forget many of the things that happened on the other side."

<sup>203</sup> From the Prologue, ll. 12-13, of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*.

into which the sun goes down. He appears to migrate westward daily, and tempts us to follow him. He is the Great Western Pioneer whom the nations follow. We dream all night of those mountain-ridges in the horizon, though they may be of vapor only, which were last gilded by his rays. The island of Atlantis,<sup>204</sup> and the islands and gardens of the Hesperides,<sup>205</sup> a sort of terrestrial paradise, appear to have been the Great West of the ancients, enveloped in mystery and poetry. Who has not seen in imagination, when 10 looking into the sunset sky, the gardens of the Hesperides, and the foundation of all those fables?

Columbus felt the westward tendency more strongly than any before. He obeyed it, and found a New World for Castile and Leon.<sup>206</sup> The herd of men in those days scented fresh pastures from afar.

And now the sun had stretched out all the hills,  
And now was dropped into the western bay;  
At last *he* rose, and twitched his mantle blue;  
To-morrow to fresh woods and pastures new.<sup>207</sup>

. . . If the moon looks larger here than in Europe, probably the sun looks larger also. If the heavens of America appear infinitely higher, and the stars brighter, I trust that these facts are symbolical of the height to which the philosophy and poetry and religion of her inhabitants may one day soar. At length, perchance, the immaterial heaven will appear as much higher to the American mind, and the intimations that star it as much brighter. For I believe that climate does thus react on man,—as there is some- 30 thing in the mountain-air that feeds the spirit and inspires. Will not man grow to greater perfection intellectually as well as physically under these influences? Or is it unimportant how many foggy days there are in his life? I trust that we shall be more imaginative, that our thoughts will be clearer, fresher, and more ethereal, as our sky,—our understanding more comprehensive and broader, like our plains,—our intellect generally on a grander scale, like our thunder and lightning, our rivers and mountains and for- 40 ests,—and our hearts shall even correspond in breadth and depth and grandeur to our inland seas. Perchance there will appear to the traveller something, he knows not what, of *læta* and *glabra*, of joyous and

<sup>204</sup> A mythical western continent or island mentioned by Plato, Bacon, and others as an ideal land, a Utopia.

<sup>205</sup> The garden of classical mythology where grew the golden apples.

<sup>206</sup> Formerly kingdoms in Spain, which were united by the marriage of Isabella and Ferdinand.

<sup>207</sup> The concluding lines of Milton's "Lycidas."

scene, in our very faces. Else to what end does the world go on, and why was America discovered?

To Americans I hardly need to say,—

Westward the star of empire takes its way.<sup>208</sup>

As a true patriot, I should be ashamed to think that Adam in paradise was more favorably situated on the whole than the backwoodsman in this country.

Our sympathies in Massachusetts are not confined to New England; though we may be estranged from the South, we sympathise with the West. There is the home of the younger sons, as among the Scandinavians they took to the sea for their inheritance. It is too late to be studying Hebrew; it is more important to understand even the slang of to-day.

Some months ago I went to see a panorama of the Rhine. It was like a dream of the Middle Ages. I floated down its historic stream in something more than imagination, under bridges built by the Ro- 20 mans, and repaired by later heroes, past cities and castles whose very names were music to my ears, and each of which was the subject of a legend. There were Ehrenbreitstein and Rolandsceck and Coblenz,<sup>209</sup> which I knew only in history. They were ruins that interested me chiefly. There seemed to come up from its waters and its vine-clad hills and valleys a hushed music as of Crusaders departing for the Holy Land. I floated along under the spell of enchantment, as if I had been transported to an heroic 30 age, and breathed an atmosphere of chivalry.

Soon after, I went to see a panorama of the Mississippi, and as I worked my way up the river in the light of to-day, and saw the steamboats wooding up, counted the rising cities, gazed on the fresh ruins of Nauvoo,<sup>210</sup> beheld the Indians moving west across the stream, and, as before I had looked up the Moselle,<sup>211</sup> now looked up the Ohio and the Missouri, and heard the legends of Dubuque and of Wenona's Cliff,<sup>212</sup>—still thinking more of the future than of the past or present,—I saw that this was a Rhine stream of a different kind; that the foundations of castles were yet to be laid, and the famous

<sup>208</sup> Adapted from line 21 of George Berkeley's poem "On the Prospect of Planting Arts and Learning in America" (1752).

<sup>209</sup> Cities on the Rhine.

<sup>210</sup> A reference to the riot against the Mormons in 1844 at Nauvoo, Illinois, whence the Mormons migrated to Great Salt Lake.

<sup>211</sup> A French river that flows into the Rhine.

<sup>212</sup> Indian legends associated with Dubuque, Iowa, and Winona, Minnesota.

bridges were yet to be thrown over the river; and I felt that *this was the heroic age itself*, though we know it not, for the hero is commonly the simplest and obscurest of men.

The West of which I speak is but another name for the Wild; and what I have been preparing to say is, that in Wildness is the preservation of the World. Every tree sends its fibres forth in search of the Wild. The cities import it at any price. Men plough and sail for it. From the forest and wilderness come the tonics and barks which brace mankind. Our ancestors were savages. The story of Romulus and Remus<sup>213</sup> being suckled by a wolf is not a meaningless fable. The founders of every State which has risen to eminence have drawn their nourishment and vigor from a similar wild source. It was because the children of the Empire were not suckled by the wolf that they were conquered and displaced by the children of the Northern forests<sup>214</sup> who were.

I believe in the forest, and in the meadow, and in the night in which the corn grows. We require an infusion of hemlock-spruce or arbor-vitæ in our tea. There is a difference between eating and drinking for strength and from mere gluttony. The Hottentots eagerly devour the marrow of the koodoo and other antelopes raw, as a matter of course. Some of our Northern Indians eat raw the marrow of the Arctic reindeer, as well as various other parts, including the summits of the antlers, as long as they are soft. And herein, perchance, they have stolen a march on the cooks of Paris. They get what usually goes to feed the fire. This is probably better than stall-fed beef and slaughter-house pork to make a man of. Give me a wildness whose glance no civilisation can endure,—as if we lived on the marrow of koodoos devoured raw.

There are some intervals which border the strain of the wood-thrush, to which I would migrate,—wild lands where no settler has squatted; to which, I methinks, I am already acclimated.

The African hunter Cummings<sup>215</sup> tells us that the skin of the cland, as well as that of most other antelopes just killed, emits the most delicious per-

fume of trees and grass. I would have every man so much like a wild antelope, so much a part and parcel of Nature, that his very person should thus sweetly advertise our senses of his presence, and remind us of those parts of Nature which he most haunts. I feel no disposition to be satirical, when the trapper's coat emits the odor of musquash even; it is a sweeter scent to me than that which commonly exhales from the merchant's or the scholar's garments. When I go into their wardrobes and handle their vestments, I am reminded of no grassy plains and flowery meads which they have frequented, but of dusty merchants' exchanges and libraries rather.

A tanned skin is something more than respectable, and perhaps olive is a fitter color than white for a man,—a denizen of the woods. "The pale white man!" I do not wonder that the African pitied him. Darwin the naturalist says, "A white man bathing by the side of a Tahitian was like a plant bleached by the 20 gardener's art, compared with a fine, dark green one, growing vigorously in the open fields."<sup>216</sup>

Ben Jonson exclaims,—

How near to good is what is fair!

So I would say,—

How near to good is what is wild!

Life consists with wildness. The most alive is the wildest. Not yet subdued to man, its presence refreshes him. One who pressed forward incessantly and never rested from his labors, who grew fast and made infinite demands on life, would always find himself in a new country or wilderness, and surrounded by the raw material of life. He would be climbing over the prostrate stems of primitive forest-trees.

Hope and the future for me are not in lawns and cultivated fields, not in towns and cities, but in the impervious and quaking swamps. When, formerly, I have analysed my partiality for some farm which I had contemplated purchasing, I have frequently found that I was attracted solely by a few square rods of impermeable and unfathomable bog,—a natural sink in one corner of it. That was the jewel which dazzled me. I derive more of my subsistence from the swamps which surround my native town than from the cultivated gardens in the village. There are no richer parterres to my eyes than the dense beds

<sup>213</sup> Romulus was the legendary founder of Rome. Remus was his twin brother.

<sup>214</sup> A reference to the sturdy Goths who sacked Rome in 410.

<sup>215</sup> R. G. Gordon-Cummings (1820-1866), author of *Five Years of Hunter's Life in the Far Interior of South Africa*, 2 vols., London and New York, 1850.

<sup>216</sup> From chap. XVIII of Charles Darwin's *Voyage of the Beagle* (1832-36).

of dwarf andromeda (*Cassandra calyculata*) which cover these tender places on the earth's surface. Botany cannot go further than tell me the names of the shrubs which grow there,—the high-blueberry, panicked andromeda, lambkill, azalca, and rhodora,—all standing in the quaking sphagnum. I often think that I should like to have my house front on this mass of dull red bushes, omitting other flower plots and borders, transplanted spruce and trim box, even gravelled walks,—to have this fertile spot under my 10 windows, not a few imported barrowfulls of soil only to cover the sand which was thrown out in digging the cellar. Why not put my house, my parlor, behind this plot, instead of behind that mcagre assemblage of curiosities, that poor apology for a Nature and Art which I call my front-yard? It is an effort to clear up and make a decent appearance when the carpenter and mason have departed, though done as much for the passer-by as the dweller within. The most tasteful front-yard fence was never an agreeable 20 object of study to me; the most elaborate ornaments, acorn-tops, or what not, soon wearied and disgusted me. Bring your sills up to the very edge of the swamp, then (though it may not be the best place for a dry cellar,) so that there be no access on that side to citizens. Front-yards are not made to walk in, but, at most through, and you could go in the back way.

Yes, though you may think me perverse, if it were proposed to me to dwell in the neighborhood of the most beautiful garden that ever human art con- 30 trived, or else of a dismal swamp,<sup>217</sup> I should certainly decide for the swamp. How vain, then, have been all your labors, citizens, for me!

My spirits infallibly rise in proportion to the outward dreariness. Give me the ocean, the desert or the wilderness! In the desert, pure air and solitude compensate for want of moisture and fertility. The traveller Burton<sup>218</sup> says of it,—“Your *morale* improves; you become frank and cordial, hospitable and single-minded. . . . In the desert spirituous liquors 40 excite only disgust. There is a keen enjoyment in a mere animal existence.” They who have been travelling long on the steppes of Tartary say,—“On re-entering cultivated lands, the agitation, perplexity, and turmoil of civilisation oppressed and suffocated us; the air seemed to fail us, and we felt every moment as if about to die of asphyxia.” When I would

<sup>217</sup> Suggested by the Dismal Swamp in Virginia and North Carolina.

<sup>218</sup> Sir Richard Francis Burton (1821-90), English traveler and author.

recreate myself, I seek the darkest wood, the thickest and most interminable, and, to the citizen, most dismal swamp. I enter a swamp as a sacred place,—a *sanctum sanctorum*.<sup>219</sup> There is the strength, the marrow of Nature. The wild-wood covers the virgin mould,—and the same soil is good for men and for trees. A man's health requires as many acres of meadow to his prospect as his farm does loads of muck. There are the strong meats on which he feeds. A town is saved, not more by the righteous men in it than by the woods and swamps that surround it. A township where one primitive forest waves above while another primitive forest rots below,—such a town is fitted to raise not only corn and potatoes, but poets and philosophers for the coming ages. In such a soil grew Homer and Confucius and the rest, and out of such a wilderness comes the Reformer eating locusts and wild honey.<sup>220</sup>

To preserve wild animals implies generally the creation of a forest for them to dwell in or resort to. So it is with man. A hundred years ago they sold bark in our streets peeled from our own woods. In the very aspect of those primitive and rugged trees, there was, methinks, a tanning principle which hardened and consolidated the fibres of men's thoughts. Ah! already I shudder for these comparatively degenerate days of my native village, when you cannot collect a load of bark of good thickness, and we no longer produce tar and turpentine.

The civilised nations—Greece, Rome, England—have been sustained by the primitive forests which anciently rotted where they stand. They survive as long as the soil is not exhausted. Alas for human culture! little is to be expected of a nation, when the vegetable mould is exhausted, and it is compelled to make manure of the bones of its fathers. There the poet sustains himself merely by his own superfluous fat, and the philosopher comes down on his marrow-bones.

It is said to be the task of the American “to work the virgin soil,” and that “agriculture here already assumes proportions unknown everywhere else.” I think that the farmer displaces the Indian even because he redeems the meadow, and so makes himself stronger and in some respects more natural. I was surveying for a man the other day a single straight line one hundred and thirty-two rods long, through a swamp, at whose entrance might have been written

<sup>219</sup> The Holy of Holies.

<sup>220</sup> An allusion to John the Baptist in Matthew 3:1-4.



the words which Dante read over the entrance to the infernal regions,—“Leave all hope, ye that enter,”—that is, of ever getting out again; where at one time I saw my employer actually up to his neck and swimming for his life in his property, though it was still winter. He had another similar swamp which I could not survey at all, because it was completely under water, and nevertheless, with regard to a third swamp, which I did *survey* from a distance, he remarked to me, true to his instincts, that he would not part with it for any consideration, on account of the mud which it contained. And that man intends to put a girdling ditch round the whole in the course of forty months, and so redeem it by the magic of his spade. I refer to him only as the type of a class.

The weapons with which we have gained our most important victories, which should be handed down as heirlooms from father to son, are not the sword and the lance, but the bushwhack, the turf-cutter, the spade, and the bog-hoe, rusted with the blood of many a meadow, and begrimed with the dust of many a hard-fought field. The very winds blew the Indian's corn-field into the meadow, and pointed out the way which he had not the skill to follow. He had no better implement with which to intrench himself in the land than a clam-shell. But the farmer is armed with plough and spade.

In Literature it is only the wild that attracts us. Dulness is but another name for tameness. It is the uncivilised free and wild thinking in “Hamlet” and the “Iliad,” in all the Scriptures and Mythologies, not learned in the schools, that delights us. As the wild duck is more swift and beautiful than the tame, so is the wild—the mallard—thought, which ‘mid falling dews wings its way<sup>221</sup> above the fens. A truly good book is something as natural, and as unexpectedly and unaccountably fair and perfect, as a wild flower discovered on the prairies of the West or in the jungles of the East. Genius is a light which makes the darkness visible,<sup>222</sup> like the lightning's<sup>223</sup> flash, which perchance shatters the temple of knowledge itself,—and not a taper lighted at the hearthstone of the race, which pales before the light of common day.<sup>223</sup>

English literature, from the days of the minstrels to the Lake Poets,—Chaucer and Spenser and Milton, and even Shakespeare, included,—breathes no

quite fresh and in this sense wild strain. It is an essentially tame and civilised literature, reflecting Greece and Rome. Her wilderness is a greenwood,—her wild man a Robin Hood. There is plenty of genial love of Nature, but not so much of Nature herself. Her chronicles inform us when her wild animals, but not when the wild man in her, became extinct.

The science of Humboldt is one thing, poetry is another thing. The poet to-day, notwithstanding all the discoveries of science, and the accumulated learning of mankind, enjoys no advantage over Homer.

Where is the literature which gives expression to Nature? He would be a poet who could impress the winds and streams into his service, to speak for him; who nailed words to their primitive senses, as farmers drive down stakes in the spring, which the frost has heaved; who derived his words as often as he used them,—transplanted them to his page with earth adhering to their roots; whose words were so true and fresh and natural that they would appear to expand like the buds at the approach of spring, though they lay half-smothered between two musty leaves in a library,—ay, to bloom and bear fruit there, after their kind, annually, for the faithful reader, in sympathy with surrounding Nature.

I do not know of any poetry to quote which adequately expresses this yearning for the Wild. Approached from this side, the best poetry is tame. I do not know where to find in any literature, ancient or modern, any account which contents me of that Nature with which even I am acquainted. You will perceive that I demand something which no Augustan nor Elizabethan age, which no *culture*, in short, can give. Mythology comes nearer to it than anything. How much more fertile a Nature, at least, has Grecian mythology its root in than English literature! Mythology is the crop which the Old World bore before its soil was exhausted, before the fancy and imagination were affected with blight; and which it still bears, wherever its pristine vigor is unabated. All other literatures endure only as the elms which overshadow our houses; but this is like the great dragon-tree of the Western Isles, as old as mankind, and, whether that does or not, will endure as long; for the decay of other literatures makes the soil in which it thrives.

The West is preparing to add its fables to those of the East. The valleys of the Ganges, the Nile, and the Rhine, having yielded their crop, it remains to be seen what the valleys of the Amazon, the Plate,

<sup>221</sup> Compare the opening line of Bryant's “To a Waterfowl.”

<sup>222</sup> Milton uses the same phrase in *Paradise Lost*, I, 63.

<sup>223</sup> A Wordsworthian phrase from the “Ode on Intimations of Immortality,” line 76.



the Orinoco, the St. Lawrence, and the Mississippi will produce. Perchance, when, in the course of ages, American liberty has become a fiction of the past,—as it is to some extent a fiction of the present,—the poets of the world will be inspired by American mythology.

The wildest dreams of wild men, even, are not the less true, though they may not recommend themselves to the sense which is most common among Englishmen and Americans to-day. It is not every truth that recommends itself to the common sense. Nature has a place for the wild clematis as well as for the cabbage. Some expressions of truth are reminiscent,—others merely *sensible*, as the phrase is,—others prophetic. Some forms of disease, even, may prophesy forms of health. The geologist has discovered that the figures of serpents, griffins, flying dragons, and other fanciful embellishments of heraldry, have their prototypes in the forms of fossil species which were extinct before man was created, and hence “indicate a faint and shadowy knowledge of a previous state of organic existence.” The Hindoos dreamed that the earth rested on an elephant, and the elephant on a tortoise, and the tortoise on a serpent; and though it may be an unimportant coincidence, it will not be out of place here to state, that a fossil tortoise has lately been discovered in Asia large enough to support an elephant. I confess that I am partial to these wild fancies, which transcend the order of time and development. They are the sublimest recreation of the intellect. The partridge loves peas, but not those that go with her into the pot.

In short, all good things are wild and free. There is something in a strain of music, whether produced by an instrument or by the human voice,—take the sound of a bugle in a summer night, for instance,—which by its wildness, to speak without satire, reminds me of the cries emitted by wild beasts in their native forests. It is so much of their wildness as I can understand. Give me for my friends and neighbors wild men, not tame ones. The wildness of the savage is but a faint symbol of the awful ferity<sup>224</sup> with which good men and lovers meet.

I love even to see the domestic animals reassert their native rights,—any evidence that they have not wholly lost their original wild habits and vigor; as when my neighbor's cow breaks out of her pasture early in the spring and boldly swims the river, a cold,

<sup>224</sup> Wildness, savageness.

grey tide, twenty-five or thirty rods wide, swollen by the melted snow. It is the buffalo crossing the Mississippi. This exploit confers some dignity on the herd in my eyes,—already dignified. The seeds of instinct are preserved under the thick hides of cattle and horses, like seeds in the bowels of the earth, an indefinite period.

Any sportiveness in cattle is unexpected. I saw one day a herd of a dozen bullocks and cows running about and frisking in unwieldy sport, like huge rats, even like kittens. They shook their heads, raised their tails, and rushed up and down a hill, and I perceived by their horns, as well as by their activity, their relation to the deer tribe. But, alas! a sudden loud *Whoa!* would have damped their ardor at once, reduced them from venison to beef, and stiffened their sides and sinews like the locomotive. Who but the Evil One has cried “*Whoa!*” to mankind? Indeed, the life of cattle, like that of many men, is but a sort of locomotiveness; they move a side at a time, and man, by his machinery, is meeting the horse and the ox halfway. Whatever part the whip has touched is thenceforth palsied. Who would ever think of a *side* of any of the supple cat tribe, as we speak of a *side* of beef?

I rejoice that horses and steers have to be broken before they can be made the slaves of men, and that men themselves have some wild oats still left to sow before they become submissive members of society. Undoubtedly, all men are not equally fit subjects for civilisation; and because the majority, like dogs and sheep, are tame by inherited disposition, this is no reason why the others should have their natures broken that they may be reduced to the same level. Men are in the main alike, but they were made several in order that they might be various. If a low use is to be served, one man will do nearly or quite as well as another; if a high one, individual excellence is to be regarded. Any man can stop a hole to keep the wind away,<sup>225</sup> but no other man could serve so rare a use as the author of this illustration did. Confucius says,—“The skins of the tiger and the leopard, when they are tanned, are as the skins of the dog and the sheep tanned.” But it is not the part of a true culture to tame tigers, any more than it is to make sheep ferocious; and tanning their skins for shoes is not the best use to which they can be put. . . .

<sup>225</sup> Adapted from *Hamlet*, V, ii, 237: “Might stop the hole to keep the wind away.”

Sympathy <sup>226</sup>

Lately, alas, I knew a gentle boy,  
 Whose features all were cast in Virtue's mould,  
 As one she had designed for Beauty's toy,  
 But after manned him for her own stronghold.

On every side he open was as day,  
 That you might see no lack of strength within,  
 For walls and ports do only serve alway  
 For a pretense to feebleness and sin.

Say not that Cæsar was victorious,  
 With toil and strife who stormed the House  
 of Fame, 10  
 In other sense this youth was glorious,  
 Himself a kingdom wheresoe'er he came.

No strength went out to get him victory,  
 When all was income of its own accord;  
 For where he went none other was to see,  
 But all were parcel of their noble lord.

He forayed like the subtile haze of summer,  
 That stilly shows fresh landscapes to our eyes,  
 And revolutions works without a murmur,  
 Or rustling of a leaf beneath the skies. 20

So was I taken unawares by this,  
 I quite forgot my homage to confess;  
 Yet now am forced to know, though hard it is,  
 I might have loved him had I loved him less.

Each moment as we nearer drew to each,  
 A stern respect withheld us farther yet,

So that we seemed beyond each other's reach,  
 And less acquainted than when first we met.

We two were one while we did sympathize,  
 So could we not the simplest bargain drive; 30  
 And what avails it now that we are wise,  
 If absence doth this doubleness contrive?

Eternity may not the chance repeat,  
 But I must tread my single way alone,  
 In sad remembrance that we once did meet,  
 And know that bliss irrevocably gone.

The spheres henceforth my elegy shall sing,  
 For elegy has other subject none;  
 Each strain of music in my ears shall ring  
 Knell of departure from that other one. 40

Make haste and celebrate my tragedy;  
 With fitting strain resound ye woods and fields;  
 Sorrow is dearer in such case to me  
 Than all the joys other occasion yields.

Is't then too late the damage to repair?  
 Distance, forsooth, from my weak grasp hath reft  
 The empty husk, and clutched the useless tare,  
 But in my hands the wheat and kernel left.

If I but love that virtue which he is,  
 Though it be scented in the morning air, 50  
 Still shall we be truest acquaintances,  
 Nor mortals know a sympathy more rare.

1839

1840

<sup>226</sup> Thoreau, like Emerson, thought of himself primarily as a poet; like Emerson, also, he seldom achieved the same excellence in verse that he did in prose. Indeed, he seldom came up to his own standard of poetry as set forth in *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers* (toward the end of the chapter entitled "Thursday"): "A poem is one undivided, unimpeded expression fallen ripe into literature, and it is undividedly and unimpededly received by those for whom it was matured."

On November 11, 1842, Emerson wrote in his diary an estimate of Thoreau's poetry that might be applied with equal justice to his own verse: "Last night Henry Thoreau read me verses which pleased, if not by beauty of particular lines, yet by the honest truth, and by the length of flight and strength of wing; for most of our poets are only writers of lines or of

epigrams. These of Henry's at least have rude strength, and we do not come to the bottom of the mine. Their fault is, that the gold does not yet flow pure, but is drossy and crude."

"Sympathy," Thoreau's first published poem, appeared in the initial number of the *Dial*, July, 1840. Emerson wrote in his *Journal* for August 1, 1839, "Last night came to me a beautiful poem from Henry Thoreau, 'Sympathy.' The purest strain, and the loftiest, I think, that has yet peeled from this unpoetic American forest."

The poem was reprinted in *A Week*, "Wednesday."

For the occasion and much-debated interpretation of the poem, see T. M. Raysor, "The Love Story of Thoreau," *Studies in Philology*, XXIII (October, 1936), 457-63, as well as Henry S. Canby's interpretation in his critical biography of Thoreau.

*Prayer*<sup>227</sup>

Great God! I ask thee for no meaner pelf  
 Than that I may not disappoint myself;  
 That in my action I may soar as high  
 As I can now discern with this clear eye;  
 And next in value, which thy kindness lends,  
 That I may greatly disappoint my friends,  
 Howe'er they think or hope that it may be,  
 They may not dream how thou'st distinguished me;

That my weak hand may equal my firm faith,  
 And my life practice more than my tongue saith; 10  
 That my low conduct may not show,  
 Nor my relenting lines,  
 That I thy purpose did not know,  
 Or overrated thy designs.

*Rumors from an Aeolian Harp*<sup>228</sup>

There is a vale which none hath seen,  
 Where foot of man has never been,  
 Such as here lives with toil and strife  
 An anxious and a sinful life.

There every virtue has its birth,  
 Ere it descends upon the earth,  
 And thither every deed returns,  
 Which in the generous bosom burns.

There love is warm, and youth is young, 10  
 And poetry is yet unsung,  
 For Virtue still adventures there,  
 And freely breathes her native air.

<sup>227</sup> First printed in an article by Emerson entitled "Prayers" in the *Dial* for July, 1842.

<sup>228</sup> The Aeolian harp, as a symbol of the creative process of the poet, occurs often among romantic writers. Emerson placed a wind-harp in his study window and loved "the natural wind-harp of the pines"; and Thoreau, in *A Week* (where his poem on the Aeolian harp was reprinted, after originally appearing in the *Dial* for October, 1842), introduced the poem with this remark:

"Music is the sound of the universal laws promulgated. It is the only assured tone. There are in it such strains as far surpass any man's faith in the loftiness of his destiny. Things are to be learned which it will be worth the while to learn. Formerly I heard these—['Rumors from an Aeolian Harp']."

Following the poem, he wrote: "I heard at some distance a faint music in the air like an Aeolian harp, which I immediately suspected to proceed from the cord of the telegraph vibrating in the just awakening morning wind, and applying my ear to one of the posts was convinced that it was so. It was the telegraph harp singing its message through the country, its message sent not by men, but by gods."

There are numerous passages in Thoreau's writings attesting his extreme sensitivity to music. Franklin B. Sanborn quotes him as saying that music "almost tore him to pieces."

And ever, if you hearken well,  
 You still may hear its vesper bell,  
 And tread of high-souled men go by,  
 Their thoughts conversing with the sky.

*The Summer Rain*<sup>229</sup>

My books I'd fain cast off, I cannot read;  
 'Twixt every page my thoughts go stray at large  
 Down in the meadow, where is richer feed,  
 And will not mind to hit their proper target.<sup>230</sup>

Plutarch was good, and so was Homer too,  
 Our Shakespeare's life were rich to live again;  
 What Plutarch read, that was not good nor true,  
 Nor Shakespeare's books, unless his books were men.

Here while I lie beneath this walnut bough,  
 What care I for the Greeks or for Troy town, 10  
 If juster battles are enacted now  
 Between the ants upon this hummock's crown?

Bid Homer wait till I the issue learn,  
 If red or black the gods will favor most,  
 Or yonder Ajax will the phalanx turn,  
 Struggling to heave some rock against the host.

Tell Shakespeare to attend some leisure hour,  
 For now I've business with this drop of dew,  
 And see you not, the clouds prepare a shower,—  
 I'll meet him shortly when the sky is blue. 20

This bed of herd's-grass and wild oats was spread  
 Last year with nicer skill than monarchs use,  
 A clover tuft is pillow for my head,  
 And violets quite overtop my shoes.

And now the cordial clouds have shut all in,  
 And gently swells the wind to say all's well,  
 The scattered drops are falling fast and thin,  
 Some in the pool, some in the flower-bell.

I am well drenched upon my bed of oats;  
 But see that globe come rolling down its stem; 30  
 Now like a lonely planet there it floats,  
 And now it sinks into my garment's hem.

Drip, drip the trees for all the country round,  
 And richness rare distills from every bough,  
 The wind alone it is makes every sound,  
 Shaking down crystals on the leaves below.

<sup>229</sup> First printed in the *Dial* for October, 1842; reprinted in *A Week*, "Thursday."

<sup>230</sup> Target.

For shame the sun will never show himself,  
Who could not with his beams e'er melt me so,  
My dripping locks,—they would become an elf,  
Who in a beaded coat does gayly go.

*Smoke* <sup>231</sup>

Light-winged Smoke, Icarian bird,<sup>232</sup>  
Melting thy pinions in thy upward flight,  
Lark without song, and messenger of dawn,  
Circling above the hamlets as thy nest;  
Or else, departing dream, and shadowy form  
Of midnight vision, gathering up thy skirts;  
By night star-veiling, and by day  
Darkening the light and blotting out the sun;  
Go thou my incense upward from this hearth,  
And ask the gods to pardon this clear flame.

*Inspiration* <sup>233</sup>

If with light head erect I sing,  
Though all the Muses lend their force,

<sup>231</sup> First published in the *Dial* for April, 1843, and republished in *Walden*, where it is introduced by the following passage: "When the villagers were lighting their fires beyond the horizon, I too gave notice to the various wild inhabitants of Walden vale, by a smoky streamer from my chimney, that I was awake."

<sup>232</sup> Daedalus (under whose name Greek writers personified the earliest development of the arts of sculpture and architecture),

From my poor love of any thing,  
The verse is weak and shallow as its source.

40 But if with bended neck I grope,  
Listening behind me for my wit,  
With faith superior to hope,  
More anxious to keep back than forward it,—

Making my soul accomplice there  
Unto the flame my heart hath lit,— 10  
Then will the verse forever wear:  
Time cannot bend the line which God hath writ.

I hearing get, who had but ears,  
And sight, who had but eyes before;  
I moments live, who lived but years,  
And truth discern, who knew but learning's lore.

Now chiefly is my natal hour,  
And only now my prime of life;  
10 Of manhood's strength it is the flower,  
'Tis peace's end and war's beginning strife. 20

It comes in summer's broadest noon,  
By a gray wall, or some chance place,  
Unseasoning time, insulting June,  
And vexing day with its presuming face.

with his son Icarus, escaped from the labyrinth of Crete by ingenious and intricate wings of his own making. Icarus flew so near the sun that his waxen wings melted and he was drowned in the sea named Icarian after him.

<sup>233</sup> First published in the *Commonwealth* for June 19, 1863, this poem in a briefer form (as here reprinted) was included by Emerson in his *Parnassus*, an anthology of notable poems. Boston, 1875.



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